

# **Redefining Humanity**

*Violence, Ritual and Political Power from the Western Zhou to the times of  
Confucius*

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract <p>Tämä tutkielman kohteena on Kongfutsen käsitys ihmisyydestä. Esitän, että se perustui Zhou-dynastian esi-isäkultin luomaan poliittiseen subjektiuteen, ja tulkintani perustaksi tutkinkin muutoksia rituaalisissa järjestelmissä, jotka toiminnallaan legitimoivat poliittista vallankäyttöä Zhou-dynastian perustamisen ja kevään ja syksyn -aikakauden päättymisen välillä (1045-476 eaa). Erityisen huomion kohteena on väkivallan käyttö, sekä konkreettisesti että symbolisessa muodossa, poliittisten yhteisöjen ja subjektien rajojen muodostamisessa.</p> <p>Tutkielman aineiston muodostaa kirjallisuuskatsaus sekä Kongfutsen sanomisia ja tekemisiä kuvaavan <i>Lunyu</i> -teoksen vanhin kerrostuma. Rituaalien ja rituaalisuuden kehitystä kuvaan Catherine Bellin ritualisaatio-käsitteen avulla. Bell näkee ritualisoinnin strategisena käyttäytymismuotona, jonka avulla toimijat voivat vaikuttaa itsensä, yhteisönsä ja ympäröivän maailman välisiin suhteisiin lisätäkseen omaa vaikutusvaltaansa näihin kaikkiin. Rituaalit ovat ennen kaikkea toimintaa, ja tämä toiminta toisaalta jäsentää tilaa kuvaamaan tiettyjä symbolisia valtasuhteita, ja toisaalta taas kirjoittaa nämä suhteet takaisin toimijoiden kehoihin.</p> <p>Zhou-dynastian esi-isäkultti perustui eliitin omaksumalle väkivallan monopolille. Dynastian synty ja sen tulevaisuus riippuivat molemmat tämän monopolin ylläpitämisestä, mikä tapahtui ravitsemalla sitä konkreettisesti ja symbolisesti lihalla, jonka hankkiminen ja kierrättäminen vaihtoverkostoissa oli eliitin identiteetin tae. Dynastian edetessä löyhään patrilineaaristen kulttien liittoon perustuva poliittinen järjestelmä ei kuitenkaan pystynyt säilyttämään sen yhtenäisyyttä. Niinpä 800-luvulta eaa alkaen eri toimijat yrittivät uudistaa rituaalijärjestelmää poliittisen vakauden saavuttamiseksi. Myös Kongfutsen ajattelu liittyy näihin uudistushankkeisiin. Hän pyrki luomaan uutta poliittista identiteettiä luopumalla vallan perinnöllisyydestä perinteisen sukulinjan merkityksessä, ja sen sijaan ohitti sen luomalla henkilökohtaisen yhteyden dynastian perustajakuninkaisiin kanssaihmistensä kautta. Kongfutse esitti, että yhteinen kulttuuriperintö loi perustan, jonka pohjalta yksilöt voivat rakentaa solidaarisuutta keskenään ja hylätä väkivaltaan perustuvan vallanperimyksen.</p>			
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# 1 Introduction

In this study I intend to probe the conceptions of humanity, understood as a distinguishing species attribute, in early Confucianism. I do not limit my analysis to the uses of the term *ren* 仁 conventionally rendered as 'humanity' or 'humane', but rather seek to construct a genealogy of Confucian human-ness. While overtly present in only one instance in the *Lunyu* 論語, and one of the later chapters at that,<sup>1</sup> the distinction between animal and human would become an important trope of later Warring States era Confucians' discussion of organized society, which was seen as an uniquely human phenomenon constantly in danger of sliding back to disorder represented by animality. It was thought that constant vigilance and stable institutions were required to polish social humans out of the bestial raw stuff. Even Mencius, the far most optimistic of the Confucians, who claimed that humans had an innate disposition to good, that is to Confucian social values, thought that education was required to keep this sprout of humanity from being trampled by disorderly impulses. I propose to probe the evolution of this conception in the epoch preceding Mencius in order to better understand its development in later times.

But the study of Confucianism is important not only to the understanding of itself, but also to other philosophies of the time. The research in late Zhou thought has long suffered from what Chad Hansen calls “The Fragmented–Schools View”, that sees each philosophical school (Daoist, Confucian, Mohist, etc.) as self-contained, elaborating their own intellectual agenda without much contact with the others.<sup>2</sup> The misguidedness of such an approach is proved by the texts themselves, where the philosophers vocally attack each others' views testifying of a lively debate between thinkers of different backgrounds.<sup>3</sup> Thus illuminating an important concept of one school can help us to interpret another, if we consider its positions to be a reaction to or a refutation of this concept. I'm thinking especially of Daoism here, as the Daoist thinkers make frequent use of animal parables and clearly have an idea of naturalness very different of the Confucian tradition. I am hoping that by analyzing the Confucian conception of humanity that is intimately linked to society, better sense could perhaps be

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1 18:6

2 Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought a Philosophical Interpretation*, 11–12.

3 Hansen, 95–96.

made of the beasts and beastly men proliferating the Daoist corpus.

In order to bring something new to the interpretation of the *Lunyu*, a text that has been studied for more than two thousand years already, I will initiate my study some five hundred years before the birth of Confucius in the establishment of the Zhou dynasty. I intend to search for the roots of Confucian humanity in the institutions and rituals of the dynasty that provided for Confucius the model for perfect government. Idealized models aside, I see ideological developments as reflections of changes in the society that produces them, thus making study of social history essential for the history of ideas. By basing my interpretation of Confucius as a response for certain changes happening in his surroundings, I hope to make it heavier so it can get to the bottom of things.

The primary material for this study is the oldest layer of the *Lunyu*, that is chapters 3-7 and 9.<sup>4</sup> By only including these chapters I hope to accomplish two things, namely to limit the breadth of the study to match formal requirements for theses, and more importantly, attempt to get to grips with the earliest views of the Confucian school as it was forming and before it engaged with its competitors. In the study I will use the convention of calling the content of these chapters the thought of Confucius, fully cognizant that the text is surely a product of at least editing and compilation of later generations. References to the *Lunyu* are made giving the number of the chapter followed by a colon and the number of the section within the chapter, ie. X:Y. All the translations from the *Lunyu* are my own.

## 1.1 The Hypothesis and Research Questions

I believe that social reality has its influence in the intellectual domain, which means that any reading of a text that claims historical significance cannot separate it from the environment that it grew out of. That is why the Confucians of my interpretation are motivated by the

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4 *Mestari Kongin Keskustelut*, 32–33.

social changes going on in the Zhou world since 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE: The breakdown of the old aristocracy and increasing social mobility that contributed to the growth of a new identity that transcended the system of lineages that governed the early part of the dynasty, and the formation of centralized states with bureaucratic governments.<sup>5</sup>

The Confucian agenda was aimed redefining *li* 禮, the rituals of ancestral veneration that had governed the life of the Zhou elite and attempted at ensuring political stability. Earlier on this had been based on the magical efficiency of the connections to the spiritual realm, and later on into a more conspicuous regulation of social privilege.<sup>6</sup> By the time of Confucius, this system had all but broken as the lineages formerly united by their ritually defined kinship ties had renounced mutual solidarity and engaged in violent competition for power. The Confucians saw that returning to the old *li* would be impossible due to social developments, and also inimical to their interests, as Confucius himself and most of his disciples came from outside the old lineages. A return to aristocratic privilege would have meant that they would have been shut out of political power. The idea that veneration of common ancestors bestowed a sense of community even to social groups comprising of members of different status,<sup>7</sup> thus allowing for harmonious existence was still tempting, however, and I aim to show that it was exactly this idea that was taken by early Confucianism and expanded in scope to fit the changed society.

The Confucians were the first to consider *li* as a separate category of action and analyze it as a system separated from the context of individual rites.<sup>8</sup> They saw the social value of such a system and devised a program of education geared towards producing persons with a sense for ritualized interaction. The difference was that whereas the old Zhou system had united the descendants of a single ancestor to celebrate his power and partake of it, the Confucians expanded the cultural group to comprise the whole civilized world by substituting the biological ancestors with cultural one. They claimed that all participants in the Zhou ritual order were the descendants of the former kings who had possessed the power and wisdom to create the social institutions that had survived to this day, and that the power lived on in everybody, because they had been molded by those very institutions, as long as they were

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5 Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC)*, 9,25.

6 Falkenhausen, 156.

7 The Zhou lineages contained members of widely differing social ranks, see Falkenhausen, 160.

8 Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 39.

prolonged by continued adherence to them. Just as the ancestors of old required ritual nourishment in order to sustain their existence and provide assistance for the living generations, the cultural ancestors had to be fed by rituals, that were detached from their religious context and expanded to become the enactment of those traditional social forms, or they would be forgotten and thus unable to secure stability for their “children”.

In short, I presume that the agenda of early Confucianism was to shift the primary personal identity of the people of the Zhou from their lineage to the whole cultural sphere, thereby fostering a feeling of inter-lineage solidarity lost because of the collapse of the old system. This new identity manifests itself as a stress on humanity/human-ness in Confucian writings. My study will hope to answer the following questions: How is *li* linked to political power during the Zhou dynasty up to the warring states period? What is the relationship between *li* and humanity/human-ness? How does the relationship of humans and animals and Zhou- and non-Zhou peoples develop during the Zhou dynasty up to the Warring States period?

## 2 A Brief history of the Zhou dynasty

The Zhou dynasty started around 1045 BCE, when an army led by their leader who would become King Wu 武王 defeated the army of the Shang 商 dynasty outside their capital and proclaimed himself the inheritor of the right to govern possessed by the Shang kings.<sup>9</sup> The Zhou were a people who had largely assimilated into Shang culture sharing their religion. Their geographical origins are disputed by scholars, but they had settled into what would become known as the Plain of Zhou (*Zhouyuan* 周原) in the Wei river valley west of the Shang lands in the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>10</sup> After establishing several of his brothers and other

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9 Shaughnessy, “Western Zhou History,” 309–10.

10 Shaughnessy, 306.



relatives to rule over the former Shang lands and creating an another royal capital nearby, king Wu returned to the west and died two years later. His son was crowned as a new king, Cheng 成, but king Wu's younger brother Dan duke of Zhou 周公旦 claimed the new king too young to rule and set himself as a regent with his half-brother duke of Shao 召公 as the Grand Protector, *taibao* 太保, of the king. These news were met with open rebellion from the dukes' siblings left to rule the Shang lands in the east, but duke Zhao managed to subdue the rebels and continued the campaign further east and north to lands outside Shang's sphere of influence and followed the example of king Wu in setting relatives up to keep the new lands under Zhou control<sup>11</sup>.

This set up the basic structure of the Zhou world: the royal domain in the west and areas ruled by relatives in the east. These two halves were separated by mountains, which could only be traversed through a narrow pass.<sup>12</sup> This meant that the connections between them were difficult to keep up, which would influence the decline of the royal house some two hundred years later. The regency of duke Zhou was brought to an end after seven years after duke Shao and king Cheng manouvered him out of the royal administration and he retired to the western capital Chengzhou 成周 and does not feature in historical sources after that.<sup>13</sup> His successful military campaigns ensured that the dynasty lived mostly free of threats to its rule for the long reigns of king Cheng and his successor Kang 康. After about a century the political environment deteriorated and the dynasty faced attacks from the east, south and critically for the royal line's domain, from the northwest. King Kang's successor Zhao 昭 attempted to respond to the southern threat that had the potential to cut the narrow line of communication between the western and eastern halves of the realm, but his campaign resulted in a catastrophe with the king himself dying and the western royal armies entirely lost<sup>14</sup>.

This loss of concrete military strength and prestige led to a decline in the power of the royal house. Its control of the states in the eastern part of the realm slowly loosened, and the military threat in the northwest increased to the point that the royal capital itself was raided by the invaders. There were also irregularities in the succession, with sources seeming to indicate the king being driven out of the capital at one point for over a decade by someone outside the

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11 Shaughnessy, 310–13.

12 Li, *Landscape and Power in Early China*, 36–37.

13 Shaughnessy, “Western Zhou History,” 313–17.

14 Li, *Landscape and Power in Early China*, 93–94.

royal line, and also competing pretenders from within it. All the while the dynasty attempted unsuccessfully to bring its eastern subjects back into its control with increasingly draconian measures,在<sup>15</sup> which eventually led to one of the states allying itself with the kings' northwestern enemies and sacking the capital, driving the royal family east to its secondary capital, where they would rule in name only for the next five hundred years or so, while their former subordinates vied for supremacy amongst each other, marking the division between Western (1045-771 BCE) and Eastern (771-221 BCE) Zhou periods. Western Zhou history is conventionally again sub-divided into three periods: early (King Wu to King Zhao, 1045-957 BCE), middle (King Mu 穆 to King Yi 夷, 956-858 BCE), and late (King Li 厲 to King You 幽, 857 to 771 BCE). Eastern Zhou, on the other hand, is divided into two eras, the Spring and Autumn, *Chunqiu* 春秋, (771-481 BCE), named after surviving text composed on the basis of annals of the state of Lu 魯 covering the aforementioned years, and the self-evidently named Warring States, *Zhanguo* 戰國, (480-221 BCE) that terminates on the unification of the Zhou world under the state of Qin 秦, who was able to conquer all its rivals.

This interstate competition led to important changes in society as the states attempted to mobilize all resources available to them to best their rivals, or at least survive. In the political arena a multi-state system was devised, where the most powerful and prestigious of the state leaders would be bestowed the title of Protector of the Zhou monarchy (*ba* 霸<sup>16</sup>), presiding over regular interstate conferences where issues were debated, and also had a role of commander-in-chief, tasked with punishing states who had made conquests deemed unjust and responding to military threats from beyond the Zhou sphere.<sup>17</sup>

Not all relations to powers outside the Central States were hostile however. The Spring and Autumn period also saw several ethnically and linguistically diverse political units joining the interstate system and thus adopting the ritual system and elite culture of the Central Plains. These were Chu 楚 in the modern-day Hubei 湖北 province around the middle of the Yangtze river and Wu 吳 and Yue 越 nearer to its mouth. The level of integration is evident in the fact that leaders of both Wu and Chu held the position of Protector during the Spring and Autumn. The interstate institutions had lost their importance by the Warring States period, however, as

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<sup>15</sup> Li, 97–107.

<sup>16</sup> Often translated as 'tyrant' or something similar, as his role was seen as an usurpation of the key royal prerogatives by later Confucian historiography, and the title acquired a strong negative flavor.

<sup>17</sup> Hsu, "The Spring and Autumn Period," 551–63.

the number of independent states slowly declined in conquests and warfare between the remaining intensified.<sup>18</sup>

Looking at the internal organization of the states, major changes happened in the relations between the nobility on the one hand and the commoners on the other. In the Zhou system each landholding noble had an effectively independent realm that was a miniature version of his superiors'. Governmental positions were hereditary, and the lineages holding the offices again had their own land to govern somewhere within the realm. This made the nobles fairly independent, and meant that the difference between them was quantitative, not qualitative, making relations between the elite egalitarian in nature. As wars were fought between armies consisting mostly of the warrior elite, the commoners were left mostly to their own devices, and only the ones living close by to the cities, which were mostly centers of ritual and production of weaponry and luxury items, not of population, were obliged to provide for the urban elites.<sup>19</sup> This started to change as the kings disappeared from the top of the hierarchy, the ones next in line, rulers of major states, started to compete for status, eventually taking the title of king for themselves. This situation caused the position of the ruling lines to diverge from their ministers and other nobility of their state, whose position was further assailed by changes in administrative practices and a rising professional middle class<sup>20</sup>.

These reforms also had a major impact on the relation of state power to the masses. The intense warfare had meant that the demand for increased military power could not be met by the elite, especially as most of the states could not expand their borders easily, and thus no new holdings could be granted to support new warriors. So the eyes of rulers turned to the peasants, who started to get drafted into military service in a development that would culminate to the major states fielding armies several hundred thousand troops strong by the end of the Warring States period. This drew the farming population into the orbit of state power for the first time, as new administrative measures had to be developed in order to exploit this new reserve of military power. Censuses were completed to register population, codes of laws promulgated for ensuring the proper conduct and discipline of these new soldiers, possibly unwilling to actually march into campaigns, logistic challenges of moving

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18 Hsu, 563–65.

19 Hsu, 572.

20 Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC)*, 394–97.

supplies for such masses of people had to be met. This required new skills, and this requirement was met by a rising class of professionals, who were employed for their abilities, not for their ancestry. These bureaucratic practices originating in the military filtered into civil administration also, and the state reached its power directly to its new subjects, who in addition to serving in the military, now also provided income for the state in the form of direct taxes on production, and whose compliance also in times of peace was more and more ensured by criminal justice administered by state.<sup>21</sup>

This centralization of power caused the old lineage-based system to fade into the sidelines. Direct control of the rural populace by the state replaced the ritual gift-giving networks that had redistributed revenue along the networks formed of nested lineages with taxation and the draft system meant that the state leaders did not depend on their noble subjects for military power.<sup>22</sup> As serving administrative positions depended more and more of possessing expert skills, rather than the set inculcated by traditional elite education, the political space of the noble lineage was squeezed from both above and below and in most cases resulted in the fall of the lineage as the basic unit of society and replacing it with the household, individualizing the subjects of a state.<sup>23</sup> In several states the most powerful lineages could leverage their position and managed to drive out the former ruling lineage, as happened in Confucius' home state Lu, where three ministerial lineages captured power from the dukes and ruled as a triumvirate, but for the vast majority of them the developments meant a slide into obscurity. The exalted position of leaders on the contrary resulted in the development of a doctrine of a cosmic ruler, who drew their legitimacy from the ability to mesh with the structure of the universe and thus ensure peace and stability in both the human and natural world.

### 3 Theories

My understanding of Confucius owes a lot to Robert Eno's view of early Confucianism, although I differ from his account in several ways that will be discussed in later chapters. Eno claims that Confucianism was primarily about the practice of certain ritual curriculum

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21 Hsu, "The Spring and Autumn Period," 573–75.

22 Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, 60.

23 Lewis, 53.

designed to impart a set of skills necessary for realizing the natural order present in the world, comprising the social. All texts written by the movement were secondary to the actual rituals, and merely report on experiences engendered by enacting them, or justifying their continuation in a world that had largely moved on from the situation they had supposedly been instituted in during the Western Zhou dynasty. Thus the philosophical system of early Confucianism was not conveyed in the texts, but in concrete practice among the Ru study groups, such as Confucius and his disciples. This raises interesting questions about the interpretation of these texts. Any attempt of reading them must take into account the physical dimension of Ruism or risk failing to reflect the significance that they had to their contemporaries.<sup>24</sup>

In common with modern anthropologists and scientist of religion, the early Confucians recognized the power of ritual and were the among the first in China to consider it as a separate category of actions and thus appreciate it as a system detached from the magical efficacy of individual rites.<sup>25</sup> This opened up a new level of theorizing the function of ritual and shifted attention from it's concrete objective, the appeasement and service of spirits, to it's social functions that were seen to be channeled through the bodies of individual actors.<sup>26</sup> This is why I will consider physical dimensions of ritual, both in the ancestral cult and in Confucian practice. The theoretical tools employed reflect this attention to the body.

### 3.1 Catherine Bell – Ritualization

Bell sees ritualization as a strategic social behavior that has, although unknowingly, as it's object the production of a ritualized body, that is, a body that has developed an intuition for ritual. “This sense of ritual exists as an implicit variety of schemes whose deployment works to produce sociocultural situations that the ritualized body can dominate in some way.”<sup>27</sup>

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24 Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 6–8.

25 Eno, 39.

26 Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China*, 14.

27 Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 98.

Ritualization is not communication of social facts in a symbolically coded language, but production of bodies embodying these facts on one hand, and the production of these facts by the bodies on the other<sup>28</sup>.

This production is done by creating a spatial environment which is structured according to certain privileged binary oppositions projected on others in order to create a hierarchy of spatial schemes, where the core schemes dominate the interpretation of all others, that generates a sense of a closed system of meaning where anything can be seen as a manifestation of the basic contrasts:

Returning briefly to the example of the traditional Catholic eucharistic meal, whole sets of oppositions emerge to dominate other sets. The scheme of a central or 'centered' community versus a dispersed population is generated as people congregate together, coming from different directions and situations to assemble at a specific place and time. When they are gathered, the scheme is overlaid with a higher versus lower opposition in which a raised altar and elevated host, the lifting and lowering of voices and eyes, as well as sequences of standing and kneeling, and so on, all generate a contrast between a higher reality (spiritual) and a lower one (mundane). However, this scheme is overlaid in turn by an inner versus outer one when the higher reality is internalized through the food shared by the participants. Ultimately, the inner–outer scheme comes to dominate the oppositions of higher–lower and centered–dispersed, generating an experience of a higher spiritual authority as an internalized reality.<sup>29</sup>

This interlocking of different categories provides a certain logic to the ritualized space and makes possible the association of some symbols to others, such as conflating the pairs light–dark and good–evil. Invoking such relations creates an experience of a coherent world, and thus naturalizes the hegemony embedded in privileging certain symbolic terms over others. This structuring of experience is not a structure, however. The relations between the oppositions are not resolved in ritual, but rather multiplied in an endless chain of deferral of meaning from one to another. This means that the structure of ritualized space molding the ritual agents is never closed, but defers its signification to the world outside it, as does the

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28 Bell, 100.

29 Bell, 101–2.

sstructuring action of bodies engaged in ritualization.<sup>30</sup>

All these aforementioned workings of ritualization remain unknown to its practitioners. They see themselves in the act of creating new persons and influencing the world they live in, but how this is achieved, they know not. The power of ritual derives from the fact that the schemes of ritualization that constitute the sense of ritual and are expressive of it function simultaneously to structure the experience of the world and mold the experiencer to possess dispositions that guide towards effective action in a world thus structured. It thus validates itself, but sees this validation as coming from some more authoritative source.<sup>31</sup> And as powers tend to, this one is not equally distributed. Some individuals' sense of ritual is more finely honed and they are able to deploy and remake these schemes more effectively thus having a greater influence in structuring the relationship between the community and its environment and to appropriate the construction of coherent world effected through ritualized bodies in their interests. This enables them to negotiate power relations when the power is claimed to derive from some authority beyond the community, such as God, and experience the social order as personally empowering<sup>32</sup>.

## 4 Analysis

To understand how the Zhou ritual system was transformed by the Confucians, we must first outline its workings. A detailed description of the Zhou ancestral veneration exists in the *Dazhuan* 大傳 and *Sangfu xiaoji* 喪服小記 -chapters of the *Liji* 禮記, but this is a later idealization of the system, as the *Liji* was only compiled in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE.<sup>33</sup> It is relevant for this study however, since the *Liji* reflects the view Warring States scholars had of their past. The schematized view was projected on to the Early Western Zhou that had come to represent the golden age of civilization, and could thus carry hints on what was thought to be desirable when it comes to ritual interaction.

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30 Ibid., p.102-107

31 Ibid., p. 110

32 Ibid., p. 110-117

33 Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC)*, 66.

The historical reality differed from the views of later scholars. The idealization of the beginning of the Zhou dynasty coalesced in the narrative of kings Wen and Wu laying out the basis of a new ideal society on the ruins of the corrupt Shang. Actually, the Zhou, as reflected in the archaeological record, pretty much continued the practices of the Shang unchanged or with slight modifications until the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century, when demographic expansion of the elite had reached the point where the family gathering -style rituals became impossible, and significant changes were made in both lineage organization and the rituals in the so-called Western Zhou Ritual Reform. The resulting system is the parent of the one that is described in the *Liji*.<sup>34</sup> These drastic changes in Zhou society are completely unrecorded in the Chinese historiographic tradition, and have been inferred from material evidence, mostly the bronze objects used in the rituals and their inscriptions. Both of these approaches, the historic and the genealogic, to the Zhou ancestral cult will be followed below. In addition, an outline of the social history of the dynasty will be sketched, as the evolution of the ritual system was responded to the social changes happening during the dynasty.

#### 4.1 The Idealized Structure of the Zhou Ancestral Cult as Presented in the *Liji* 禮記<sup>35</sup>

There were three fundamental categories in the account of the ancestral cult that is contained in the *Liji*: *biezi* 別子, *zong* 宗 and *shu*- or *zhongzi* 庶/衆子. The first means a 'separated son' and was a person who had been placed outside the cult of his progenitors and had become the *dazu* 大祖 or *shizu* 始祖, founding ancestor, of his own. *Zong* was the main line of the lineage, traced from the founder through eldest sons, who would lead rituals addressed to the founder, to which all of his living descendants participated. The others of a generation were referred as *shu*-/zhongzi, younger sons, who were the ones related to the ancestor in question in a manner

34 Falkenhausen, 65–66. The *Liji* is a compilation of materials describing a government structure and rituals that were purported to be that of the Zhou dynasty. The compilation dates from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE and is highly schematic and idealized and filled with anachronisms. It is based on some earlier materials that have been interpreted through the lens of the Warring States period.

35 This subsection is based on Vandermeersch, *Wangdao Ou La Voie Royale : Recherches Sur l'esprit Des Institutions de La Chine Archaïque. Tome 1, Structures Cultuelles et Structures Familiales*.



that they were required to participate in the rituals, but had no privileged position.

In addition to this permanent cult of the founder, each lineage also contained several temporary ones, as the right to be sacrificed to in perpetuity was only conferred to founders of new lineages. Other male members of the lineage maintained their personal sacrifices only for a number of generations depending on their rank in the social hierarchy to the maximum of the fifth. These cults were called *xiaozong* 小宗, small *zong*, and their leadership was also transferred in the line of eldest sons. However, every five generations the lineage would be split, so that all younger brothers of the main line son would found new sub-lineages with lower rank than the original. Thus every member of the ranked elite sacrificed to at least their father and the founder of their lineage, but could be involved in as many as five cults in many different roles, for example: Someone could lead his brothers and their and his own children in the veneration of his deceased father, all the aforementioned and additionally his cousins and their children along with surviving paternal uncles in honoring his grandfather and participate in the rites of his great-grandfather and the founder officiated by the chiefs of their respective cults.

The case of the cult of the grandfather in the above example is interesting, because of the station of his younger sons, being the uncles of the chief of cult, belong to an older generation than him, but ritually are required to treat him as an older brother in the context of the cult, because the chief as a continuator of the line of his predecessor inherited their ritual status. This led to formally defined ritual relations overriding biological ones, at least in the context of ritual.

## 4.2 The Sociopolitical Significance of the Zhou Ancestral Cult

The ritual system of the Zhou dynasty was largely inherited from the preceding Shang<sup>36</sup>. In it's

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<sup>36</sup> Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC)*, 2.

center lay ancestor veneration. We know mostly about the lineage cult of the Shang kings, but some evidence exist of other lineages performing sacrifices to their own ancestors also. The deceased kings were thought to reside in heaven along with the supreme being Shangdi 上帝, who was imagined as the ultimate ancestor, possibly of not only the Shang people, but also of others.<sup>37</sup> The Shang ancestors were identified with the suns, of which ten were thought existing, and Shangdi as the polestar in the center of the celestial realm. Offerings were made to the ancestors identified with the sun then traversing the sky, who were then able to influence Shangdi, fending off disasters, or informing the rulers of it's intentions.<sup>38</sup> Successful communication with the ancestors was therefore an important guarantee for the success of kingly endeavours such as agriculture, hunting and war.

When the Zhou conquered the Shang they legitimized their rule by claiming that Shangdi had changed his principal son, that is to say his inheritor from the debauching Shang line to the morally upright Zhou. This was ritually confirmed by cutting off the Shang from their ritual connection to Shangdi by the conquering king Wu of Zhou and the adoption of the sobriquet Tianzi 天子 by the principal heir of the Zhou royal lineage.<sup>39</sup> It is interesting how this trope of adoption of replacing the heir apparent with a person selected for their merit also figures prominently in the stories surrounding the early mythological paragon-emperors Yao 堯 and Shun 舜 and is repeated in the first transfer of kingship of the Zhou, when future king Wu's older brother was banished and he was made the heir. Edward L. Shaughnessy has also posited that there would be traces of a succession dispute detectable in the early parts of the *Shang shu* 尚書<sup>40</sup> between the Duke Zhou, who was a regent and the royal tutor of the third Zhou king Cheng, during the latter's infancy, supporting himself as the new ruler on basis of merit and the other regent Duke Shao, who sided with the precept of king Wen 文王 who had passed the throne to his son<sup>41</sup>.

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37 Allan, "On the Identity of Shang Di 上帝 and the Origin of the Concept of a Celestial Mandate (Tian Ming 天命)," 12–13.

38 Allan, 9.

39 Allan, 38–39.

40 *Shang shu*, also known as *Shu jing* is a collection of texts that claim to be from the Early Western Zhou. Some indeed are, but the majority have been composed later. The dating has been done on stylistic grounds and is not very precise.

41 Shaughnessy, "THE DUKE OF ZHOU'S RETIREMENT IN THE EAST AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE MINISTERIAL-MONARCH DEBATE IN CHINESE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY," 63–64.

The senior male member of the Zhou lineage thus became the representative of the heavenly powers on earth, since in the ancestor veneration system it is the eldest male of the principal 'stem' lineage that conducts the rituals that are used to communicate with the deceased part of the lineage, which in this case included Heaven, that had adopted the Zhou kings as its progeny. This meant that the religious and political orders were identical. Secular authority was derived from religious, and the state organization was that of the ancestral cult. This is reflected in the fact that the king referred to his subjects with their personal given names, which were only used by parents talking to their children.<sup>42</sup> After conquering the Shang territory and several surrounding polities allied with them king Wu installed his relatives and close allies as governors of these new domains.<sup>43</sup> These lords were granted the right to be venerated by their descendants and became the founders of new lineages that were linked as junior branches to the royal cult. Their leaders therefore owed ritual allegiance to the descendant of the primary lineage, that is, the king, whose position towards them was like that of an eldest brother officiating the cult of their forefathers.

It is not known how pervasive ancestor veneration was during the Shang and Early Zhou. Probably only the ruling class of society, the lineages of the king and great feudal lords, had a structured cult with a temple and institutional rituals. It is clear in any case that the elaborate system described in warring states ritual manuals only came into being in the middle 9<sup>th</sup> century Western Zhou Ritual Reform discussed below.<sup>44</sup> Surnames started to become more common also as the number of lineages multiplied, and new ways of referring to them had to be developed.<sup>45</sup> Establishing a structured lineage was a privilege reserved to the greatest lords, mostly relatives of the king, and meant that the person whose achievements had merited it would have the right to be individually receiving ritual homage from all his descendants in perpetuity in becoming the founding ancestor of his family cult. In addition he also gave his posterity rank, as status in the hierarchy of ranks was transferred along the principal line of descent from father to eldest son. Younger sons' position deteriorated in every generation, so that the younger sons of younger sons eventually descended to commonerhood, even in lineages of illustrious lords.

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42 Vandermeersch, *Wangdao Ou La Voie Royale : Recherches Sur l'esprit Des Institutions de La Chine Archaïque. Tome 1, Structures Cultuelles et Structures Familiales*, 173.

43 Brashier, *Ancestral Memory in Early China*, 73.

44 Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC)*, 155–56.

45 Vandermeersch, *Wangdao Ou La Voie Royale : Recherches Sur l'esprit Des Institutions de La Chine Archaïque. Tome 1, Structures Cultuelles et Structures Familiales*, 188–89.

A Lineage was usually connected to a specific place. Newly instituted lords were required to construct an ancestral temple to host rituals to the ancestors, and the creation of ritual vessels for the offering of food to them there.<sup>46</sup> This temple would have been situated in the domain granted to the founding ancestor to rule in virtue of his title, produce from which guaranteed the continuity of the performance of the rituals, and anchored the lineage physically. The ability to acquire land and a title ritually confirming one's right to rule over it was therefore the act of ensuring ultimate longevity, bestowing eternal personal existence as long as one's descendants were able to hold on to the one's achievements. It can be thought that every ancestral cult was primarily directed at commemorating this act, that was germane to the station and life of his offspring.

This commemoration materialized in the inscriptions of the bronze vessels that were used to serve food in ritual banquets hosted by the living for the dead. The grant of a title was accompanied by the right to employ a certain set of these vessels, that would have been cast immediately after and inscribed with a record of the events. Afterwards any officially recognized achievements of the members of the lineage would be similarly commemorated by casting them into bronze.<sup>47</sup> These inscriptions were made in the interior of the vessels that would have been filled with victuals during the rituals and thus unreadable by the participants. From this it can be deduced that the texts were mainly addressed to the ancestors, reporting the successes of their posterity.<sup>48</sup> This impression is fortified by the fact that the inscriptions do not report negative events, even later during the decline of the dynasty. There is a case of a royal military campaign against southern barbarians, that we know from historical sources was a complete failure, but vessels recording it have been discovered, and they proclaim the glorious success of the armies.

The ancestors' existence depended on the living, so they would have naturally been interested of the actions taken by their descendants. They were not reduced to simply observing, however, but could also assist. This assistance was effected through their *de* 德. *De* is often translated as power, virtue, perhaps charismatic power.<sup>49</sup> It is a quality of persons that enables them to effect transformations in their surroundings, which would seem to include the

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46 Liji 1258, quoted in Wu Hung, *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture*.

47 Rawson, Jessica, "Ancient Chinese Ritual as Seen in the Material Record," 46–47.

48 Rawson, Jessica, 45.

49 Brashier, *Ancestral Memory in Early China*, 61.

potential unborn generations of one's posterity. Originally though, *de* had connotations that tie it to land. It was the power to be remembered by establishing a lineage, which, as already said, entailed securing the means to support that lineage through the ages. Later generations were inheritors not only to the material part of the founder's *de* in the form of agricultural land, but also to the power to rule.<sup>50</sup> The reporting of successes just discussed was a means of assuring the ancestors that their later progeny had not squandered either and were still capable of upholding the original mandate *ming* 命 that kept the line secure. This continued transfer of power from the past required that the living performed their ritual duties owed to their forefathers impeccably, since the existence of the former was dependent on the nourishment provided by the food sacrifices. In other words, the ancestral cult formed a bond of dependency between lineage members gone and present: If the rituals stopped, the ancestors would cease to be able to empower the living to keep the name and title alive.

The lineage provided its members with the basic blocks of their identity. They had the name of their founder, they sought to emulate him in their life and to continue his tradition to future generations.<sup>51</sup> It also anchored them to the larger Zhou society, since all the cults were organized under that of the royal lineage and thus defined also their political duties and privileges.<sup>52</sup> The lineage system was what defined the Zhou world. It is interesting to note that the political legitimization of the conquest of Shang had been that the first Zhou king, Wen had received a mandate from heaven to govern the world. The word mandate is the same that was used for the kings' act of bestowing favors, such as the right found a lineage, and actually means to name or to command. Therefore it could be thought that the Zhou conceived themselves to have been selected as the first lineage by heaven due to the ample *de* of king Wen and given the right to rule the land allotted to them. To sum up the preceding couple of paragraphs I quote from Wu Hong discussing the legendary Nine Tripods that were the symbol of royal authority in Zhou times:

The tripods commemorated not only the ancestors who originally created and acquired these ritual objects (i.e. the establishment of the Three Dynasties) but also all previous kings who had successfully maintained the Tripods in the royal temple (and had thus proved a

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50 Brashier, *Ancestral Memory in Early China*, 62.

51 Chang, *Art, Myth, and Ritual*, 41.

52 Brashier, *Ancestral Memory in Early China*, 68–69.

dynasty's continuing mandate from Heaven). The political symbolism of the Tripods could be sustained over the several hundred years of a dynasty precisely because the *memory* of these ancestral kings was constantly renewed through ancestral sacrifices. Since only royal descendants could hold such sacrifices, any *user* of the Tripods was self-evidently the inheritor of political power.<sup>53</sup>

Since I have argued that political power flowed through the structures of the ancestral cult and that the cults of non-royal individuals were homologous to the royal one, this characterization can be extended to lower levels of the ranked society also.

### 4.3 The Development of Rituals of the Ancestral Cult

When we think about Confucianism, we tend to treat it as 'philosophy', a category often seen to consist mainly of texts written to present, attack or defend a systematic body of propositions. The *Lunyu* is markedly lacking in any of these departments, which has led to two common scholarly ways of treating it: either dismissing it as philosophy, since it fails to display the required characteristics, or assuming that, since it is philosophy, it must have a system in it, and reconstructing the supposed view of Confucius that he was unable or unwilling to put into writing clearly.

To me, neither of these ways are satisfactory. Both rest on a concept of philosophy defined genealogically as the tradition descended from the Greeks, in which logical argumentation modeled after the legal process was the defining characteristic of serious thinking. Such a view and definition of philosophy is justified, as the word itself was coined by that very tradition, but seeing that since at least the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a large portion of the descendants of the Greek thinkers have done their best to raise themselves by their bootstraps from the mire of metaphysics the tradition has increasingly been seen as, it seems to me that a

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53 Wu Hung, *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture*, 8.

narrow definition of philosophy such as the one above would be rejected even by many current practitioners in the “historical”, European philosophy. Thus it seems worthwhile to take a big tent -approach, especially in cases that deal with things in which the European tradition has been struggling with.

One such area is action. Classical Greek thought does little to bridge the gap between thought and its application. The *Lunyu*, on the contrary, seems to constantly deal with actions and the manner in which they are executed, to the extent that when questioned about a concept of his, Confucius usually recites an anecdote, rather than giving definitions or systematic overview. This attention to practical conduct and exemplarity has been picked up by Robert Eno in his *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, where he describes the Warring States Confucians as forming “dancing societies”, where they learned the ancient rituals and modes of dress and speech. While I do not necessarily agree with all of Eno’s views, his insight into what he calls “the bifurcated doctrine” of the *Ru* 儒<sup>54</sup> informs much of my own attempt at making sense of some positions of early Warring States Confucianism. Eno claims that the core of the *Ru* teaching was nonverbal and consisted of ritual actions: dances, music, reciting poetry, and so on. The written part was created only to draw in new people who hadn’t yet been able to experience the primary doctrine, or to defend the group against verbal attacks by competitors<sup>55</sup>.

As seen above, Catherine Bell places the efficacy of ritual in bodies conditioned by it, able both to respond to the world around them, but also to affect changes in it. This is done by deploying certain ritual strategies to guide the interpretation of situations in order produce favored outcomes. This ability to map reality on to a conceptual system, assigning singular events and actors as representations of larger categories, is called sense of ritual by Bell. A well developed sense grants a person the ability to steer the actions of their fellow humans by drawing on their shared understanding of the world, internalized by participation in ritual

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54 Eno uses the Chinese term *ru* instead of Confucian to highlight his view that Confucius was only a single member of a tradition that predated him. There seems to be scant evidence for the existence of the *ru* before the times of Confucius however and I stick to the anachronistic 'Confucian' in this thesis in the interest of making it more accessible to non-experts. Such a term did not exist in Chinese, where *ru* was and still is used to refer to 'Confucianism', until late 20<sup>th</sup> century, when *dangdai xin Kongzi zhuyi*, was calqued from the english 'Contemporary Neo-Confucianism', which is used to refer to certain North-American academics, who advocate for social reform of western societies based on their interpretation of Confucius.

55 Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 30–33.

action. Bell calls this ritualization. My aim in this section is to deploy this concept of ritualization to make sense of how *li*, ritual, was seen by the early Warring States Confucians, and what role it played in their educational and political programs. First, in order to map the changes effectuated by them, we must revisit the ritual system of earlier Zhou times that was the basis for this understanding of *li* in the light of Catherine Bell's theory of ritualization.

### 4.3.1 Early Western Zhou

In textual sources predating the Warring States era *li* refers to concrete ceremonies related either to the practices of the ancestral cult or sacrifices to local spirits by rulers of smaller political units, or universal spirits by the king.<sup>56</sup> As already seen above, these events were intrinsic to the Zhou political order, but not only as its expression, they also were instrumental in producing it. As there were significant changes to the rituals around the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE, referred to in scholarly literature as the Western Zhou ritual reform, I will discuss the situations before and after separately.

The ritual practices in the beginning of the dynasty formed a strong continuity with the Shang, as can be expected, the Zhou being a member of the Shang cultural sphere. In the ancestral cult the basic ritual unit was the sacrificial feast, where living members of a lineage gathered to feed and remember the deceased.<sup>57</sup> The central divisions of this ritual performance can be analyzed as past/future and us/them. The past of the lineage was represented by the ancestors, of whom most recent ones were still conceived in personal terms, but their individuality gradually faded to a collective membership in the “ancestral college”, apart from the founder, who was personally remembered.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, a path towards the future was laid out in the ritual, as the head of the cult was the eldest member of the major line of descent, from father to eldest son, within the cult, his children and probably grandchildren would have been present leading off to the future. The moment of ritual was therefore a bridge between the past and the future, a now of ritual time where both existed and extended and depended from.

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56 Nikkilä, *Early Confucianism and Inherited Thought in the Light of Some Key Terms of the Confucian Analects*. 2, *The Terms in the Confucian Analects*, 109–12.

57 Rawson, “Western Zhou Archaeology,” 386–87.

58 Brashier, *Ancestral Memory in Early China*, 60–66.



The past was renewed by remembrance of the events of the founding of the lineage and celebration of the deeds of the founder, but that memory would only last if the descendants could prove worthy of them and attain the standard set by him. The ritual feast was laid out as a proof of the prowess of the living members, as it consisted of grain and liquor fermented from it, derived from the land won by the founder, and meat representing the continuation of his ability to conquer, as hunting and war were considered to be essentially the same thing. In preparing the sacrificial feast, the living signaled that the heritage of the ancestors is in good hands and that they were worthy of the continuing support of their ancestors. The culmination of the ceremony featured the body of the son or grandson of the cult leader, and the future leader himself, who becoming a host for the ancestral spirits descending from heaven to enjoy the banquet and bridging the past/future -dichotomy concretely by in-corporating the past within the future and vice versa<sup>59</sup> ◦

This way the rituals of the ancestral cult very concretely manifested the groups an individual was a part of, as relatives gathered to remember their kin. Brothers paid respect to their father together, cousins to their grandfather and so forth. It is very probable that the spatial arrangements at the temple further reflected the relations between the participating relatives, as well as their relation to the founder and the major lineage. There were however also differentiations both more subtle and fundamental in play in the rituals. The major one was the one between 'we Zhou' and the rest of the world. This was always present, as all the lineage founders were incorporated into the Zhou royal house's cult at the time of the founding of the dynasty, making the kings Wen and Wu the ultimate founding ancestors to everybody else in the Zhou realm. The Shang kings' lineage, who were allowed to continue rituals to their own ancestors, was the exception. Thus in celebrating the conquests of their own ancestors, the celebrants also paid remembrance to the Zhou conquest of Shang and the founding and legitimacy of the dynasty.<sup>60</sup>

A further manifestation of the us/them -divide was in what was sacrificed. As mentioned above, the sacrifice was of grain and meat, and it is the latter that provides insight into the drawing of the lines between friends and enemies. The Zhou elite was essentially a warrior aristocracy, and its most important duty was the provision of sacrificial victims to its temples,

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59 Brashier, 314.

60 Li, *Early China*, 146–47.

as this was the only way of maintaining legitimate rule over the land that their lineage had been granted. The concrete offerings consisted of both domesticated animals and ones killed during large ceremonial hunts. Hunting was conceptually linked to warfare, and the catch was designated with the same term as prisoners captured on the battlefield. Both hunts and military campaigns started in the ancestral temple, where blessings of the ancestors were sought, and also ended there with the reporting of the successes in the field and the presentation of the spoils. Part of the meat from both occasions would be distributed in the network of individual ancestral cults both to parent lineages, from which the lineage in question had split, and also to dependent sub-lineages branching off from them. This created an expanding circle of “us” whose status was confirmed by the gifting of the sacrificial meat. In essence it was a message, “You are safe, we will not feed you to our ancestors.” Anyone outside this ritually acknowledged circle of non-aggression was fair game, both metaphorically and literally. Noteworthy is that alien humans were ritually indistinguishable from animals. Thus the us/them distinction was marked in who ate and who were eaten in the ancestral cult rituals.<sup>61</sup>

This is not to say that cannibalism was commonplace in the Western Zhou. Human enemies’ slaughter was enough for the ancestors, and usually only ears or heads would be brought back to the temple as tokens. However, live captives were also used as victims in rituals, which is another continuation of Shang practice, although it seems to lose favor in time during the Zhou.<sup>62</sup> Later Confucian historiography tried to erase the violence inherent in the Zhou system, as it was elevated to a golden age of civilization and high morality, and human sacrifice did not fit the image. For example, the story of king Wu’s conquest of Shang in the *Shang shu* mentions that when his troops entered the Shang capital, their weapons were clean, not bloodied from battle, as it was ultimately the virtue of the kings that decided the outcome, not arms. The version preserved in the *Lost Documents of Zhou* (*Yi Zhou shu* 逸周書) tells of rivers running red, piles of heads taken back to the kings’ ancestral temple and king Wu personally desecrating the corpse of the last Shang king Zhou before presenting it at the altar as a proof of his success.<sup>63</sup> Thus it can be said that a major function of the Western Zhou ritual system was the direction of aggression inherent in the warrior culture of the elites towards

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61 Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, 17–30.

62 Lewis, 27–28.

63 Lewis, 27–28.

victims outside of it, and so maintaining peaceful relations between those participating in it. The outsiders were comparable to animals – a resource to be harvested in the quest of preservation of lineage integrity and control of land.

The ritual obligation required symbolically re-enacting the original conquest of which the founding ancestor had been a part. This heroic original act was seen as shining from the darkness of history into which most events and persons have fallen after they have disappeared from living memory. Thus the rituals shine the light of remembrance on the deeds of the ancestors, who in turn are the very thing that makes the ritual possible.<sup>64</sup> It is therefore no surprise that written history evolved out of ancestral cult practices. Recounting the lineage history and reporting the successes of the current generations to the ancestors and also to future generations was a central practice of the cults, and in order to better perform this, the stories were committed into writing on a medium combining permanence and ritual significance: bronze. The vessels and bells used in the rituals therefore assumed another role of assuring the ancestors that they were still remembered, and that their descendants were guarding their inheritance well<sup>65</sup>.

The orderly performance of ritual thus assures its continuation into the future, making it bright and knowable. So it would seem that the light/dark -pair does not map on to the past/future simply, but that both the past and the future can be thought as either, depending on whether they are considered from their general unknowability, or from the specific living history of a lineage. It is as if the light is actually emanating from the ritual now, and reflected by the succession of ascendants and descendants participating in it through the ritual, both dependent on it for their very existence. As such, this conceptual pair escapes simple dichotomic mapping of value, and therefore calls for attention to itself. The fault of the duality seen as central to ritual schemas of reality by Bell is of course the fact that any such classification always leaves something out of the complexity of reality, as discussed by Jacques Derrida,<sup>66</sup> that resists the limitations to its infinite and subtle possibilities by strict structures. Derrida also points out that this remainder is a key to progressing beyond these simplifications, and thus to a fuller engagement with texts.

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64 Brashier, *Ancestral Memory in Early China*, 331–32.

65 Rawson, “Western Zhou Archaeology,” 364.

66 Derrida, *De La Grammatologie*.

How then are we to view the ritual time of the ancestral cult? That the historical aspect was important has already been seen, but the history is very different from the scientific connotations that we are wont to attach to the word. The history of the lineages was thoroughly subsumed into their function, the continued possession of land and power. The inscriptions reporting the deeds of the members never mention any negative performances. Even the vessels cast after the catastrophic southern expedition of king Zhao, eulogize the heroic deeds of the survivors and fail to mention the greatest military defeat known to the dynasty so far.<sup>67</sup> Thus events that were brought into the history had to conform to the predetermined structure of that history, that was the successful continuation of the tradition of the founder. Therefore the cultic history was not chronicling events happening, but rather re-enacting the mythical origin of the cult and lineage. The future also was construed as an infinite repetition of the mythical past brought to life by the ritual performance, illustrated by the ending formula of the inscriptions found on vessels “Let sons and grandsons use it for 10 000 years!” Thus the duality inherent in the conception of time is not between the past and the present, but rather between the eternity of the cult and the transitoriness of everything else.

This temporal divide is mirrored by a spatial one, as aptly described by Wu Hung:

Let us take an imaginary journey to a Three Dynasties<sup>68</sup> temple. First, we enter the town whose tall walls block off the outside. We then walk towards the center where a palace-temple compound stands, again blocked by walls or corridors. Our feeling of secrecy is gradually heightened as we enter the temple yard and penetrate layers of halls leading to the shrine of the founder of the clan, located at the end of the compound. At last, we enter the shrine; in the dim light, numerous shining bronze vessels, decorated with strange images and containing ritual offerings, suddenly loom before us. We find ourselves in a mythical world, the end of our journey where we would encounter the Origin – the *Shi*. The ritual vessels, hidden deep inside the temple compound, would provide us with the means to communicate with the invisible spirits of the ancestors – to present offerings and to ascertain their will.<sup>69</sup>

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67 Sena, “Arraying the Ancestors in Ancient China,” 71.

68 The Three Dynasties refers to the three pre-imperial dynasties of Xia, Shang and Zhou. The Xia dynasty is largely absent from current historical records, but varyingly attached to certain archaeological cultures predating the Shang.

69 Wu, “FROM TEMPLE TO TOMB,” 83–85.

As the ritual time is insulated from the outside, the ritual space is cut off from the external world, both curling around the same center, the origin. But for all the walls, physical and conceptual, this core is nevertheless wholly dependent on what lies beyond it, as actual descendants living in the world of outside of the eternal return of sacred history recreate the ritual time-space by exploiting resources found outside the walls of the city, grain, grown by those subject to it, and as already seen, meat, provided by the prowess of the lineage members conquering the world still outside, but potentially transferable to, the sacred order created by the rituals.

Although the ritual order elevated the eternal and inside as superior members of their respective conceptual pairs, from the above we can clearly see their complete dependence on their inferior counterparts. The lineage's city seat was parasitic on the countryside around it, as the unchanging ancestral reality required the descendants to adapt themselves to the concrete situations at hand in order to preserve it. Thus the ritual order, while defining a territory, and a group of people that ruled over it, actually depended on the crossing of these boundaries by certain bodies, and their transformation into something else. The process is more concrete in the bodies of victims for the sacrifices, as they were prepared by cooking them into food, the outsider thus sustaining both the spirits of the ancestors and the bodies of contemporaries. But the metaphor of cooking can be applied for the treatment of time also, the events in the real world transformed by certain recipes into a form acceptable to the ancestors, and thus to society in general. This metaphoric connection between cuisine and civilization is well attested in European languages, the French '*brut*' referring to materials or beings unworked by civilizing influence of any kind, that is being raw. The same applies for Finnish, where '*raaka*' is raw both in the sense of uncooked and brutal, and '*kypsä*' cooked, but also mature, well-developed. Thus we can see how cooking is employed to bring the undifferentiated chaotic world under the auspices of civilization by processing it into palatable form.

The wholesome influence of this processing of raw materials was extended from the individual lineage to the larger society along the lines of ritual exchange of meat as seen above, where the spoils of war and hunting converted into nourishment for the ancestors and living individuals were again put to work on the level of the larger body politic of the whole

Zhou world flowing up and down along the nested hierarchy of prestige.<sup>70</sup> This movement that forms the political structure is essentially of leftovers, and the meal and who gets to eat what and in which order defines the relations between social actors. The ritual meal is prepared for the ancestors, who hold primacy and thus are allowed to partake of it first. As they consume only the scent, the rest is left to living humans, who eat their fill, and the rest is spread to other lineages according to the relative positions in the hierarchy of cults. Thus the civilizing influence of cooking conquers the outer world, and by doing so nourishes ones own both literally and metaphorically.<sup>71</sup>

To sum up, what kind of bodies were the product of these Early Zhou ancestral cult rituals then? As the dynasty was founded in conquest, and the founders of the lineages granted their privileges due to their part in that campaign, their descendants were bound to remember and emulate these deeds due to the historical consciousness evolving in the cults, thus extending the ideal of the warrior through the generations. Martial merit was required to uphold the legitimacy of rule. These factors worked with the incentive to achieve an undying reputation, as this was the only way to achieve personal immortality and also to further the preservation of ones lineage, which of course was also a requisite of being remembered. All the while there was an inbuilt mechanism for tempering this inculcation of aggression, as the rituals also encouraged its direction outwards, against beings excluded from the ancestral cult network. This was achieved by the fact that every lineage's history stemmed from the original conquest of the kings, who were granted the world to rule by heaven. Therefore "All land is the king's land", and the sustenance each lineage drew from their allotment ultimately depended on the king. This created a ritual line between the Zhou and the outside, who were designated legitimate targets for aggression and sources of sustenance for the political order.

#### **4.3.2 Middle Western Zhou Ritual Reform**

The politico-ritual system of the early Zhou started to run into problems after the first couple of hundred years of the dynasty. One reason was demographical: The start of the Zhou had

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<sup>70</sup> Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, 30.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Dearmitt, "Cascade of Reminders".

seen large military campaigns against peoples surrounding the Shang realm expanding the area ruled by the dynasty, which had kept the elite population in check due to casualties, and also provided new land to distribute to any surplus growth. The long peaceful period following the initial expansion accelerated population growth and depleted the land resources available to establish new lineages or reward old ones. Together these factors meant that a rise in status became harder and harder to achieve, which would intensify competition for it. It also weakened the royal lineage, which became more and more dependent on its subordinates for military strength as well as faced its first succession disputes.<sup>72</sup> This development eventually led to the fall of the Western Zhou dynasty and the kings' migration east and relegation to a figurehead role in Zhou politics.<sup>73</sup>

The archaeological record shows a rapid change in both the composition and style of the ritual paraphernalia recovered from tombs dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE,<sup>74</sup> a time when the fortunes of the dynasty were turning due to internal reasons described in the above paragraph, but coinciding with increased military pressure from non-Zhou peoples north and east from them.<sup>75</sup> The changes are prefigured by developments in the eastern Zhou satellite states during the preceding century, while the bronzes from the Zhou heartland remain relatively unchanged. This would suggest a cultural and possibly political fragmentation of the Zhou realm, while epigraphic evidence from the time indicate the possibility of two different kings reigning simultaneously and a long period of regency in the capital. These factors led to the changes known as the Western Zhou Ritual Revolution or Reform, the former term coined by the art historian Jessica Rawson on the basis of analysis of the changes in decoration and form of the ritual bronzes dated to this era and the latter used by the archaeologist Lothar von Falkenhausen.<sup>76</sup> The theory has received further confirmation from studying changes in the ensembles of grave goods interred with elite individuals.<sup>77</sup> The historical records available to us mostly do not mention these changes, and it is probable that in the Springs and Autumns period the post-reform ritual system was projected backwards in time to cover the whole dynasty. This was due to a general shift of focus. As the dynasty faced difficulties in its

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72 Li, *Landscape and power in early China*, 115–16; 122–25.

73 Li, 233–34.

74 Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000–250 BC)*, 29–30.

75 Li, *Landscape and Power in Early China*, 149–58.

76 Rawson, Jessica, “Ancient Chinese Ritual as Seen in the Material Record.” Rawson is currently also referring to the events as a reform, see “Rawson, Ordering the Exotic”, 6

77 RAWSON, “ORDERING THE EXOTIC,” 11–16.

present, it increasingly turned to its illustrious past for legitimation. In the following paragraphs I will chart these changes and how they changed the focus of ritual and the kinds of actions and identities encouraged by it.

Rawson's central finding was that during the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century BCE the ritual vessels grew in size, their outline became more contoured and their surface decoration simplified radically. All these changes contributed to make them more amenable to looking at from a further distance. The Shang and Early Zhou cult had centered around the ceremonial meal, during which food and wine was served out of the vessels, and the participants would have been close to them to admire the intricate patterns cast on the surfaces. Also, the vessels had been of fairly similar size to their everyday ceramic counterparts, as they served the same purpose, tableware, although in a elevated context. The post-reform vessels by contrary impressed mainly by their size and arrangement in homogenous sets, dropping most of the surface detail. It can be surmised that these stylistic changes were made due to a shift in ritual practices that warranted the new forms, rather than simple drift in aesthetic tastes of the Zhou elites, especially as they were adopted extremely quickly over the entire Zhou world.<sup>78</sup>

In addition to the changes in the vessels themselves, the way they were produced and deployed also changed. Before, vessels were cast to commemorate an event important to the lineage, such as a royal reward or a marriage. The vessel would often bear an inscription describing the circumstances and its intended use. Thus the vessels available to a lineage would have been a mix of types commissioned by different members in different times.<sup>79</sup> Each would also have been individually designed by presumably the artisans whose duty the casting was in the polity where it was made. This is indeed the the case of excavated assemblies from unlooted graves. A single grave can contain pieces of vastly different ages and also ones originating from far away, received as gifts or looted in war. After the reform all this changes. Firstly the designs of the vessels were standardized into a narrow range and many types that had been in use from early Shang times were discontinued and some new were created. Secondly, the vessels started to be made in sets, each belonging to a single person. Within a set each vessel was nearly identical to other ones of its type, generally only their size varied so that they formed a slowly diminishing series. The sets themselves were

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78 Rawson, "Western Zhou Archaeology," 434–38.

79 Rawson, 435.



again standardized according to the social status of the owner so that everybody used the same types of vessels, but higher ranking persons had more of each type.<sup>80</sup>

It is possible that these changes were only stylistic, and that the rituals the implements were used for remained the same, but assuming the opposite seems more reasonable to me. After all, why go through the trouble of disseminating new designs and casting massive amounts of extremely expensive luxury products, while making obsolete a large part of the ones already existing just to keep doing what was already been done. So I presume that changes in ideological level were made at the same time that necessitated the new forms.<sup>81</sup> The speed of the spread of the changes and the uniformity achieved over the entire Zhou world suggests that they were consciously designed and promulgated. From these starting points we can start hypothesizing the conditions, motivations and aims of the new rituals.

Tackling the question of the design of the individual vessels first, the changes suggest that they were intended to impress from a further distance, as suggested by their increased size and lack of surface detail. As we can remember from above, the ritual vessels of the early Zhou were sequestered in the inner sanctums of the ancestral temple, where they served as an unperishing record of the lineage history as well as implements for nourishing the ancestors. The new vessels' shapes as well as their organization in matching sets seems to suggest a primary function of impressing and display,<sup>82</sup> especially as each person seems to have had their own set that would be buried with them, thus negating the archival properties that the pre-reform vessels had, and indeed in the Eastern Zhou, long inscriptions on ritual bronzes would be rare. The increased size of the bronzes also meant that several people would have been required to move them,<sup>83</sup> which would suggest a much more static role of a display piece in the ritual performances.

The assemblages of vessels in sets and their uniformity in design also point to the possible changes in their use. Before status of a lineage would have been displayed by the ingenuity and ancient provenance of the individual bronzes they would be able to deploy in their rituals,

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80 Rawson, "Ordering the Material World of the Western Zhou," 8.

81 Both von Falkenhausen and Rawson agree. See *Society in the Age of Confucius*, 48-51; "Western Zhou Archaeology", 433-435.

82 Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC)*, 48.

83 Rawson, "Western Zhou Archaeology," 434.

as the vessels cast by lower status individuals would be plainer, but the after Reform differences between them would amount to the number of vessels they used and their size, both easily perceived from a distance, without needing to study them up close to appreciate fine decoration or ancient inscriptions. All in all the picture emerging seems to point to a increasing static character of the rituals and a concern for clear indications of relative status' of individuals and lineages. The former is further supported by a change in the composition of the vessel assemblages. As stated above, many individual types of bronzes fell out of use, and most of these were connected with serving and drinking alcoholic beverages. They were mostly replaced with food vessels, suggesting reduced importance of drinking and inebriation, which would again suggest a shift to more “apollonarian” practices. There is also some historical and epigraphic evidence of an attempt to reduce drinking alcohol, which was seen as a Shang practice that contributed to that dynasty's moral bankruptcy and fall<sup>84</sup>.

These changes would make sense from a perspective of the Zhou kings at the time. The increased focus on status and uniformity can be seen as an attempt to bring order to their realm that had been increasingly drifting apart during the last century or so, due to reasons stated above. A further component in the Reform contributing to this interpretation is its deliberate use of archaism. This is evident in the shapes of the new vessels, that were modeled after early Zhou precedent, although the details were changed as above, and also in their inscriptions which employ a form of language also borrowing elements of the beginning of the dynasty, while also displaying the same reduction of individualism and repetition of set formulae that mirrors the development of the bronzes' form.<sup>85</sup> These references to the past glory and supposed unity of the dynasty under the founding kings only make sense if posited in a reality where all that had been put to question. Thus the Reform seems to have been an attempt at restoring the royal control over the Zhou realm by adopting a new way of ritually performing the past of the dynasty. While it was successful in disseminating these changes, ultimately they were not powerful enough to reverse the centrifugal forces driving the dissolution of the realm. It did leave an impression of cultural unity in both the material and ideological planes however, that might have been the inspiration for the Confucian political program.

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84 Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC)*, 48–49.

85 Rawson, “Western Zhou Archaeology,” 438–39.

Interestingly, the ritual developments are paired with administrative ones. There is a significant change in bronze inscriptions from the Zhou royal domain during the Middle Western Zhou period. As seen above, earlier bronzes recorded mostly military victories as a basis for the royal favors received by the casters of the bronzes, but these disappear almost completely in the era under discussion and are replaced by records of appointments to the royal government. Formerly the offices had been hereditary and held by the brothers or uncles of the ruling king, and while these higher officeholders remain, new minor positions below them as well as some entirely new branches of government were created and staffed with personal appointees, without considerations hereditary. There is also evidence of career progression, with initial service in junior positions or as assistants of higher officials for some years, followed by a nomination for a more independent role.<sup>86</sup> This development corresponds with the cessation of military conquest after the founding of the dynasty, which would have meant that new land was no longer available to reward services for the kings. Thus alternative solutions might have been sought, and as the royal officials had traditionally held ritual rank above the rulers of the eastern satellite states, integrating the new elite generations into the administration might have been a way of keeping up the distribution of prestige by the monarchy that was running out of its traditional resources. Notably, this bureaucratization of government did not take place in the eastern states, where hereditary ministers assisted the rulers well into the Spring and Autumn period. This fits well into the hypothesis presented above, as the states had ample room to expand on the Northern China Plain, and thus competition for land was not as extreme at this point as it was in the western royal domain.

As the Ritual Reforms were adopted first in the west, some time after the developments described in the last paragraph had been underway, we could surmise that they were an answer to some new social effects of them. Assuming that an increase in administrative rank would have corresponded with rising ritual rank too, we can see how the capability of the old ritual system to perform and indicate the relative importance of individuals would have been challenged, as an appointment could elevate one to a more exalted position than what would have been customary from one's lineage background. The focus on easy determination and display of social prestige in the Reformed ritual system would have no doubt been useful in navigating the increasingly complex and malleable social structure of the royal domain. Or, it

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86 Li, *Early China*, 148–49.

could have been an attempt to curb the increasing tendency to social mobility and return to the old hereditary statuses by marking them more clearly. The fact that the developments seem to have been underway in some of the eastern states before the adoption of reforms in the Zhou capital areas could favor the latter option. Either way, the motivation can be plausibly seen as stemming from social developments.

There is a shift in the attention of the ancestors evident in these changes also. While earlier they were mostly concerned with the continuing martiality of their successors, now their interest seems to lay in more civil matters. It is of course the living who define what the ancestors want to see, but it is still remarkable that where only some decades earlier, reports would be of numbers of enemies and cattle captured in battle, they now listed entrusting the inspection of royal storehouses to a descendant. No doubt this is a sign of a profound change in the self-understanding of the elites, and while it wasn't complete, as military action continued to be occasionally reported, the shift in the arena where social competition was acted out was major. As well as new activities, these reforms also introduced new competitors. As a person's status had been conferred by their lineage and their position within it, both determined by birth, any attempts at raising that status would have been directed through the lineage, thus also assisting one's relatives. The possibility of individual appointments changed this however, as it became possible to seek fame and recognition for oneself, rather than glorifying the lineage and ultimately its founding ancestor. This might have been a factor contributing to the dissolution of the lineage as a basic building block of society.

Having described the social developments that led to the ritual reform and described some of its outward manifestations left to us, what about the changes in the realm of ideology then, what did it mean? To recap the analysis of the pre-reform system above, its main function was to maintain the lineages by ensuring the transmission of *de* of the founders to their current descendants. The help of the ancestors was solicited by remembering their deeds and modeling oneself after them, proof of which was the continued delivery of sacrificial victims in form of enemies captured or slain in battle, or animals killed in hunts. Both of these classes of victims were ritually equivalent and served to divide the world into a nonhuman part used to provide for, and a human part defined by the participation in the Zhou lineage cult network defined by ritually eating and circulating the meat sourced from without. This was the

material aspect of *de* that, for Zhou political philosophy, conceptually originated in heaven, that had bestowed it to the kings' line, that enabled them to rule, as already seen. The effect of possessing this power manifested itself as making the kings 'bright' (*ming*) and 'terrible' (*wei*), both also properties of heaven itself. The connection of *de* to terror is interesting considering my interpretation of the root of the ancestral cult being in ritual violence, and is strengthened by the fact that in Shang sources its meaning is closely connected to both sacrifice and warfare, forming part of a complex of words relating to capturing and ritually killing victims.<sup>87</sup> As the Zhou seem to have adopted both the writing and ritual systems of the Shang with few alterations, I see no reason not to assume continuity in the meaning of *de* across the transition. Thus the potential to rule and the potential to kill seem to be covered by the same concept, which would no doubt explain why terror was a product of possessing this power.

During the Western Zhou however, the connotations of *de* seem to change. As the dynasty's initial expansion passed and the long peaceful period commenced, the physical threat and terror attached to it seem to recede and be replaced, or at least supplemented, with fascination, an irresistible pull it exerted to the rest of the world. This can of course be seen as a sublimation of a very concrete physical pull towards the altars of Zhou effected on the Shang kings, rebels and other threats to their rule by the kings. This ability to attract was manifested in the institution of visits to the court by subordinates. The regional lords were required to pay visits to the king, who would feast them and provide gifts, thus affirming the relationship and loyalty of his subjects. The extension of hospitality an extension of the provision of meat from the ancestral temple discussed above, and served to communicate the peaceful relation between the two lineages.<sup>88</sup> Initially this circle of hospitality defined the Zhou realm, and polities lying outside were identified as those not coming to court (*bu ting fang*). In the early period, hostile outsiders were subdued and Zhou regional states installed to control their territories, but after the beginning of the dynasty either due to shift in policy, or simply lack of military power, this model of expansion was abandoned by the Zhou and replaced with tributary relations, where action was taken only against those refusing to provide the court with items of luxury production.<sup>89</sup> This can be seen as a new interpretation of the necessity of “eating” the outside world into a more symbolical plane, where the power of the kings is more

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87 Kryukov, “Symbols of Power and Communication in Pre-Confucian China (on the Anthropology of *de*) Preliminary Assumptions,” 325–26.

88 Khayutina, “Royal Hospitality and Geopolitical Constitution of the Western Zhou Polity,” 11–28.

89 Khayutina, 28–37.

latent, subjugating potential enemies by force other than military and the “flesh” provided is more cultural in nature as the incorporation of exotic luxuries into the Zhou ritual sphere proved the symbolic dominion over its surroundings<sup>90</sup>.

This import of foreign artifacts into ritual contexts is increasingly visible from the late part of the Middle Western Zhou onward,<sup>91,92</sup> foreshadowing the ritual reforms by about fifty years and coincides with the troubles in the monarchy. This would imply a situation where the increasingly independent regional rulers would have turned away from the royal lineage as a source of prestige and legitimation for their rule and attempted to increase their standing by manifesting their *de* by their ability to attract “foreigners” to themselves. The foreignness of the Zhou states themselves must also be considered. In their inception they were essentially military outposts with some Zhou and former Shang subjects imported in addition to the governing lineage itself, surrounded by indigenous populations. By time it stands to reason that there must have been accommodations on both sides to form some kind of hybrid cultures, especially as it is known that the Zhou favored finding marriage partners from their surrounding polities, thus creating diplomatic links.<sup>93</sup> The increase in “exotic” materials can therefore be seen as localization of the Zhou culture happening in areas that were increasingly independent of the royal heartlands. This cultural drift might have been another reason for the reforms, as standardizing the ritual expression could have been seen as critical to the unity of the Zhou realm, although some features of the new ritual system were adopted foreign influences, perhaps as a compromise designed to make the new practices more acceptable to a ever wider range of subjects.

This new approach to signaling *de* created a novel situation, the accumulation of the outside within the community supposedly defined by the kings' *de*. While in the earlier conception of ritual relations, the matter brought in to feed the Zhou was consumed, or presented to other lineages for consumption, the acts of conquest and gift were enough to manifest *de*, now the symbolic ingestion of artifacts and cultural influences led to accumulation, which leads to inequality. Thus it became possible to amass prestige, without a clear way of redistributing it to match possessions to the traditional hierarchy. It also softened the borders of the ritual

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90 RAWSON, “ORDERING THE EXOTIC,” 72.

91 Rawson, 1999

92 RAWSON, “ORDERING THE EXOTIC,” 7.

93 Rawson, “Ordering the Material World of the Western Zhou,” 7.

regime, since the new foci of prestige were shared with the outsiders, which meant that there were now commensurate gradations of social status within and without the Zhou world, while before the outsiders had been worthy only as a source of sustenance.

Now we can see the aims of the ritual reforms arising out of these developments. The reinforcement of social order and gradations of rank that had been blurred by alternative sources of prestige and the reinstallation of the Zhou kings into the center of the ritual and political system. Materially this was achieved by creating a new set of definite measures of rank in the new set of ritual implements. Aesthetically they formed a break with the tradition, meaning that antiques and exotic items, formerly of great prestige, could not be substituted, meaning that everybody was on the same level playing field. While being a break with the tradition and current trends, the new styles also referenced the past in the pursuit of ritually re-centering the Zhou, as many of the vessel shapes were throwbacks to the beginning of the dynasty.<sup>94</sup> The fact that the new types were almost instantly adopted in the royal domain, shows that they were a conscious redesign that originated in the royal government.<sup>95</sup> This created a link by which anyone accepting the new ritual style, would also be affirming the centrality and legitimacy of the monarchy, which indeed happened as the new bronze types were in use all over the Zhou world within some decades. The identification of the reform with the kings also reinforced the compromised boundary between the in- and outsides, as it renewed the ritual language binding the Zhou lineages together and also provided a reminder of the true measure of social rank.

The new system promoted social harmony that had become increasingly important in the political rhetoric of the time leading to the reforms, possibly due to lack of it in the actual social situation. The Shi Qiang *pan* 盤, a bronze vessel cast around 900 BCE by royal scribe, *shi* 史, called Qiang of a lineage named Wei, or possibly a sub-lineage of it, famous for its long inscription recounting the history of the Zhou royal house in tandem with the Wei lineage. It starts with telling that King Wen first harmonized his government and heaven responded by sending its *de* down, which enabled Wen to unite all countries of the world. This revised the earlier conception of the conquest as the original event in the history of the dynasty and the manifestation of the *de* of the royal line, again reflecting the changing view of

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94 Rawson, "Western Zhou Archaeology," 439.

95 Rawson, 439.

the nature of *de* as a charismatic power to elicit cooperation peacefully rather than subdue with might. A similar development is visible in the relation between the royal lineage and their subjects, which formerly had been channelled through the founding ancestor's participation in the original conquest and division of its spoils, but increasingly was seen through continued obedient service to the kings throughout generations, each one responsible for renewing the fealty directly, instead of simply modeling the first ancestor<sup>96</sup>.

To sum up some features of the ritual reform, we see that it aimed at standardizing ritual expression that had diverged over the Zhou realm, while reminding subjects of the centrality of the royal lineage and especially the momentousness of the feats performed by the founding kings Wen and Wu and thus their exalted position among the world, thus propping the position of their descendants also.<sup>97</sup> While the figure of the king was enlarged, his authority was also transposed to a more abstract level from the direct threat of violence behind the legitimization of rule prevalent earlier in the dynasty. This abstractness was reflected in the reformed ritual practice, which also transformed from wilder, more direct and personal rites inherited from the Shang, to a variety that sought to display and exemplify the charismatic power to generate order and deference that was now increasingly seen as the root of the capability to rule. Discussing the ritual reforms, von Falkenhausen states that they “suggest a ritual environment that had, by ca. 850 BC, become less concerned with religious experience than with correct performance.”<sup>98</sup> He also suggests that the historical documents depicting the founding of the dynasty found in the *Shang shu* and *Shi jing* 詩經<sup>99</sup>, would date from this period, as the descriptions contained in them reflect similar mythologization of the founding kings, instead of being faithful records of speeches and actions performed earlier. Therefore they can, at least tentatively, be used as source material describing the post-reform rituals.

It is not possible to present a detailed analysis of the pertinent *Shi jing* -odes within the confines of this study, but I will comment on three general trends immediately visible in the *Zhou song* -section and the first third of the *Da ya* that contains material about King Wen.<sup>100</sup>

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96 Sena, “Arraying the Ancestors in Ancient China,” 74–75.

97 Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC)*, 157.

98 Falkenhausen, 156.

99 The *Shi jing*, or Classic of Poetry is a collection of poetry from the Zhou dynasty comprising about 300 individual poems. The anthology existed in some form during the time of Confucius, although the transmitted edition dates from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE.

100 The *Song* is generally considered to contain lyrics of songs sung in sacrificial rituals, while the *Da ya* is



The first is the picture painted of the rituals of the royal ancestral cult in the *Song*.<sup>101</sup> We see multitudes of people, assistants, princes, royals bustling about their separate duties arranging paraphernalia and performing certain parts of the rituals. All the while the solemnity and orderliness of the proceedings is being stressed. The spirits are described as descending to appreciate the performance as an audience, not as participants. We are clearly far from the feast of earlier times where the spirits participated directly through the intermediary of the body of the impersonator<sup>102</sup>.

Second feature I want to draw attention to is the focus on grain and agriculture.<sup>103</sup> It is the successful harvest that enables the Zhou to properly serve their ancestors, not hunting or war. Sacrificial bulls are mentioned, but they originate within the cultivated sphere of civilization, not in the wild. Agriculture is also credited a civilizing action in relation to humans as odes 290 and 291 describe the coordinated action of masses of people required for sowing, harvesting and converting wildlands into fields. Thus we can see how the symbolic appropriation of the world external to civilization has been moved from the violence and individual glory of the hunt into the cooperation necessitated by efficient large scale agriculture with a concomitant change in the perception of rulership. The third feature ties into the second one above through the figure of Houji, the mythical primal ancestor to the royal lineage who was also credited with the invention of agriculture. The *Shi jing* clearly attempts to create a predynastic history for the Zhou, telling of the virtuous deeds of King Wen's father and grandfather, who were elevated by applying the title 'king' to them posthumously, and also of Houji. All of them are described as having a special relationship with heaven due to their virtuous actions, thus prefiguring the Mandate finally received by King Wen.<sup>104</sup> This is no doubt a strategy of legitimizing the rule of the royal lineage, as we have seen that antiquity was consciously referenced by the reforms, and therefore probably carried effects in increased prestige. As all of the lineages traced their founding ancestors to the time of the conquest, creating a history for the kings pushing past that moment effectively ensured their seniority among the nobility and might have allowed them to stand ritually apart due to their age.

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regarded as a compilation of elite music from the Zhou metropolitan area.

101 *Shi jing* 266-296

102 Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC)*, 47.

103 *Shi jing* 275-279, 290-291

104 Ibid. 235-244, 275

The ever increasing symbolification of violence in the reformed ancestral cult practices meant that war and hunting, both of whom had been essential forms ritual behavior connected to the cult, were transformed and integrated into the new system in new guises. One of them was the archery ritual (*Dashe* 大射), occasionally mentioned in the bronze inscriptions, that had obvious links to both hunting and war, as the bow was the primary weapon of the Zhou nobility, but from the inscriptions it is clear that the ritual was very formal, targets were inanimate, and it was linked to diplomacy and visits of major nobles. Not much else can be deduced from the inscriptions, but it is clear that the ritual elevated a practical combat skill into a realm of ritual and politics, and thus it can be surmised that the original purpose of killing targets was no longer relevant to elite life. A similar development can be seen in process on the institution of warfare in general. Hunts and raids were originally seen as recreations of the founding acts of violence performed by the founding ancestors, that were the source of the *de* of the lineage. There is evidence of a transformation of this practice in the royal ancestral cult, where the conquest campaign of King Wu was adapted into a form of ritual dance that would be performed during sacrifices<sup>105</sup> to establish the right to govern of the dynasty, but again transposed onto a symbolic level.

The increasing elaborateness and complexity of rituals after the reforms must have changed the way they were organized as well. Coordinating music and dance performances by large ensembles and providing food for larger and larger numbers of guest required specialists at least controlling the ritual performances. It would seem also logical that considering the focus on immaculate performances, that the dancers and musicians might have been specially trained too, with the actual celebrants relegated to the audience with perhaps a stage visit here and there. The difference to the past is striking. Whereas before the point of the rituals had been to affirm the capability of the present members of the cult to prove that they could match the deeds of the ancestors, now they were to preside over symbolic re-enactment of lineage history, thus affirming their descent from the giants of the past and the allegiances to their peers and superiors that they entailed, but without the experiential dimension of unity with the living past, that had in effect been turned into history.

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### 4.3.3 The Spring and Autumn period

The inability of the ancestral cult system to regulate and distribute political power was apparent by the end of Western Zhou, as the monarchy was increasingly controlled by the regional rulers,<sup>106</sup> and similar developments were underway in many of their own states, where major subject lineages were competing with each other and the rulers for control. This led to a search for alternative ways of governing relations between lineages with the blood covenant (*meng* 盟) institution replacing traditional ritual ties first among the state rulers and filtering downward in society from there.<sup>107</sup> The covenants comprised of two parts, a text stipulating the responsibilities of the participants and sanctions for breaking them, and a ceremony where the text was probably read aloud in front of witnesses, who, in the most complete example of a preserved covenant, included “the spirits of the great mountains and rivers, the collected heavenly spirits and spirits who receive sacrifice, the former kings and former lords, and the ancestors of the seven surnames and twelve states”.<sup>108</sup> The spirits were summoned with the blood of a sacrificial animal, and the pledge substantiated with the drinking of its blood. Thus we can see that there were continuities with earlier ritual, but also significant differences.

The reliance on violence as a mean to attract the spirits is still evident in the practice, which corresponds to the earlier Western Zhou notion of sacrifice being equated with war. The point is further corroborated by the fact that during the ceremony the ear of the victim was cut off, just as slain enemies' ears were brought to the ancestral temple for reporting of successful battles.<sup>109</sup> The textual communication with spirits is also familiar from the bronze inscriptions. What is striking in the quotation above is the list of beings invoked. The participants in the covenant were lords of regional states that had vanquished the state of Zheng in 562 BCE, but they confidently call on spirits that had been the exclusive ritual prerogative of the Zhou kings, including the royal ancestors and heaven. This suggests a collectivization of spiritual beings, who had been only available through familiar connections, or in the case of local spirits, the control of land inexorably linked to descent, but were now available to all to call on. Furthermore, they did no longer serve a positive role in conferring privilege and creating

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106 Chen and Pines, “Where Is King Ping? The History and Historiography of the Zhou Dynasty’s Eastward Relocation,” 13.

107 Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, 43–44.

108 Lewis, 47.

109 Lewis, 46.

social order, but acted as enforcers of any order agreed upon by the participants in the covenant. Both of these characteristics can be seen as mirroring developments in the administrative structure of the states, where bureaucratization of government was in the process of sidelining hereditary officials on the other hand, and first written codes of law were being promulgated, making the state take precedence over the lineages in the handling of disputes and misbehavior<sup>110</sup>.

A further interesting characteristic of the blood covenants is that they employ violence as a way of political legitimacy in the same way as the ancestral rituals predating the reforms described above. It is perhaps telling of the reforms' success that the conceptual changes inherent in them were largely ignored in the construction of new forms of political ritual. This might point to the fact, that although the material changes were widely adopted, the intended effect of “taming” the warrior culture of the elites by increasing the symbolic distance between political power and violence was largely unsuccessful. So when the kings, and the ancestral cult along them, lost their status as the source of unity, the replacement relied on ritually confirming the primacy of military power as the producer of political control. Rhetorically however, most of the regional rulers still clung to the primacy of the kings and claimed to be protecting the monarchy through their actions, although they freely infringed on royal privileges.

The way such ritual infractions were dealt with changed with the covenant institution. While the Zhou kings had responded to usurpation or insubordination with “pacifying” the offenders, which meant forcing them to uphold their ritual obligations, and thus repairing the break in the ritual order of the world, the punishment for breaking a covenant was far more severe. In the example of the list of enforcers quoted above, the texts states that if someone violates the mandate (*ming*) stipulated in it the spirits will “destroy him so that his people desert him, he loses rank and clan, and his state and family are extinguished.”<sup>111</sup> What for the earlier Zhou world had been a cataclysmic event associated with the loss of territory and cessation of the ancestral sacrifices of a state,<sup>112</sup> the eradicating an entire lineage became a

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110 Hsu, “The Spring and Autumn Period,” 584–85.

111 Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, 48.

112 For contrast, King Wu installed relatives of the Shang kings to continue their sacrifices, even though they were construed as betraying the mandate of heaven. The removal of the corrupt members and loss of ritual primacy and acceptance of their now subordinate position was enough.

standard tool for punishing political opponents or disloyal subjects in the machinations that increasingly occupied the elite during the Eastern Zhou.

The destruction of a lineage seldom meant the killing of all its members, usually only the leaders and immediate kin were slain and the land taken, with the lower ranking member possibly expelled from the state. This led to increasing numbers of lower ranking elites without clear social status or means of subsistence, both of which had been provided by the lineage. This floating population was drawn upon by the factions still in competition with each other, and the covenant was increasingly used to form ties of political loyalty between individuals. This way what had been a substitute for the authority of the kings to facilitate cooperation between the regional rulers eventually became the institution to form political communities from individuals in general. Although these coalitions were based on the common will of the participants, they were not in any way democratic, as the covenants always had a host or a master, that is someone to whom loyalty was pledged, and thus formed hierarchic ties. This formed new structures of authority that bypassed lineage loyalties and the ritually sanctioned relations between them. The legitimacy of the bond created by the covenant still relied on the sacrifice as an act of symbolic war, but the nourishing aspect that strengthened the reciprocal bond between the sacrificer and the spirits was entirely lacking and the ritual killing served only as a reminder of what would befall if either party would break the covenant.<sup>113</sup>

## 4.4 The Ritualism of Confucius

This is more or less the state of affairs around Confucius' lifetime (traditional dates 551-479 BCE). Very little certain is known of his life, but it appears that he was born into an elite family, albeit one fairly low status. There are hints of him being forced to work for his living when young in the *Lunyu* itself, but he was also able to learn of the inherited literature from

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<sup>113</sup> Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, 49–52.

earlier Zhou times, which has led some to suggest that his occupation might have been a ritual specialist engaged in staging the elaborate performances connected with the ancestral cult of the nobility.<sup>114</sup> Later on he served in minor government positions in his home state of Lu, while also gathering students around him. Around 496 BCE Confucius left Lu, possibly due to moral disgust toward the usurpation of its rule by three ministerial lineages, who had exiled the legitimate ruler and installed a puppet in his stead. For the following decade or so Confucius toured the regional states with his students, seeking audiences with rulers, but without much success. After returning to Lu he might have received a middle-ranking post in the administration, but details on the matter are inconclusive. After his death his students continued to spread his teachings, but they held differing interpretations of them and divided into separate schools.<sup>115</sup>

Having now sketched the social milieu and its historical development and the life of Confucius, it is time to see what exactly was his response to the crisis that the Spring and Autumn period society was facing. It is clear that Confucius saw himself as a Zhou loyalist intent on restoring the authority of the dynasty, but in order to see how exactly this could have been achieved we have to inspect how few key terms are treated in the *Lunyu*. These are *li*, ritual, *ren*, humanity and *junzi*, commonly translated as 'gentleman'. In addition to these, we will look into how he thought of certain related issues such as political authority and heredity.

#### 4.4.1 The *junzi*

We shall start with the figure of *junzi*. The concept is central to Confucius' project. It is the goal of his own studies and his education of others. Often translated as 'noble man', 'superior man' or something similar, the literal translation is 'the son of a ruler', that is an *heir*. I find this literal translation to be more useful for my interpretation than 'noble man' for two reasons. First 'nobility' in the sense of 'belonging to the ruling class (by birth)' is obviously an impossible translation, since it is not possible to aspire to birthright. While it is possible to attain the position by one's own deeds also, there are multiple passages in the *Lunyu*

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114 Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 37.

115 Kallio, *Mestari Kongin Keskustelut*, 23–26.

describing the *junzi* as indifferent to high station, so clearly this cannot be what Confucius means by it.<sup>116</sup> The other option 'noble' as 'ethically excellent' is a possible option, and a popular one among translators, but it does not assist in interpretation, as it only begs the question 'What did Confucius consider as ethical?' to make any sense of it, therefore simply acting as a veil for the actual question.

That the question is about heredity and power is then evident in Confucius' choice of term for his object that combines the concepts. While concrete inheritance of station would seem to make sense if we see Confucius as a traditionalist wishing to return to the old system of hereditary rule through the ancestral cults, but clearly this can't be the case, as he is advocating the position of an heir for all of his students, even though many of them are from the lower classes of society and aspiring for a ruling position would mean usurpation of traditional privilege. Clearly something else is meant by him, and I believe the key to understanding where Confucius sees himself and his students inheriting his position from lies in two passages in the *Lunyu*, 7:23 and 9:5.

7:23 “The master said: The *de* in me has been birthed by heaven, what can Huan Tui<sup>117</sup> do to me?

子曰：天生德於予，桓魋其如予何？

9:5 “The Master was under threat in Kuang. He said: Even though King Wen is already gone, isn't his *wen* still here? If heaven would have wanted this *wen* to perish, us who are yet to die would have not been able to be uplifted by it. Since heaven has not yet allowed this *wen* to perish, what can the men of Kuang do to me?”

子畏於匡。曰：文王既沒，文不在茲乎？天之將喪斯文也，後死者不得與於斯文也；天之未喪斯文也，匡人其如予何

These passages show Confucius confronted with powerful opponents and in both cases he asserts his superiority by claiming he has something that has been passed on from a higher power, *de* engendered in him by heaven in the first case, the *wen*, of king Wen in the second.

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<sup>116</sup> 4:5, 4:11

<sup>117</sup> Huan Tui was a minister of war (*sima*) of the state of Song. Why he antagonized Confucius is not known.

As the *de* of King Wen derives from heaven, his acts and therefore the *wen* left by them are also of heavenly origin. According to the theory of the Mandate of Heaven, the *de* of heaven should be the royal lineage's prerogative, as it is the one selected by to rule the world and since *de* is inherited through the rituals of the ancestral cult as seen above, only the descendants of the royal line should have access to it, unless Heaven has shifted its mandate elsewhere. So there are two possibilities for Confucius to possess the *de* of Heaven: Heaven has retired the Mandate from the royal line and granted it to Confucius. We would expect him to mention this more often if he believed it to be so, so we can state this as an unlikely interpretation. The other option would be that Confucius sees himself as a descendant of King Wen, that is, his heir.

It is clear that a literal interpretation of Confucius' conception of his heredity is impossible, but what does it then mean? The other passage quoted above provides the answer. In it he states that even though king Wen, the originator of the Zhou house is no longer, something of him still remains, his *wen*. preserved by Heaven for the benefit of those who have come after him. *Wen* are patterns, here best understood as the traces left of the deeds of an ancestor still visible in the present. In the *Lunyu* they are mostly an object of study, something that is required to become an *heir*, and perhaps crucially, in 3:14, it is the excellence of the Zhou dynasty's *wen* that causes Confucius to follow it's lead. Later *wen* came to mean texts, and by extension culture and the civil side of the civilian/military distinction. So Confucius seems to trace his ancestry to King Wen through study of his heritage still present in the cultural fabric of his times through immersing himself in and putting into practice the cultural and social institutions that are the product of the work of King Wen in establishing the base of Zhou society.

Thus for Confucius the focus of the ancestral cult is no longer the sacrifice that facilitates the flow from past to present and vice versa, not even symbolically. He seems to agree to the developments in political relations that deepened the gulf between ruler and subject to the extent that the former needed nothing but respect and obedience from the latter. King Wen has put his institutions in place and Confucius' responsibility is that his orders, *ming*, or mandate is carried out and on. On the other hand, the decision is Confucius' to make, if he wants, he can become the heir of the dynasty through conscious effort of emulating King Wen. Thus the



ancestral system becomes a meritocracy, as knowledge of and skill in performance of the dynasty's cultural heritage becomes the defining condition of the crown prince instead of conventional inheritance.

The *junzi* was then a heir to the Zhou power, but reinterpreted to fit the new situation. The lineages were gone or on their way out of the political arena, as was the ancestral cult and they had shown that sacrifice and family solidarity could not preserve the *de* of the exemplars of yore and keep the civilized world united. The insight on which Confucius based his teaching was that the rituals that bound the Zhou world together were not really the grand displays and hunts of the ancestral cult, but the social rubric, the dress, manners, the relations between people were the true legacy of the kings. They defined a new community that transcended clan loyalties and were available to all, if only people would see them. This explains the stress on immanence of virtue in the early parts of the *Lunyu* where “If I want virtue, it is here.”<sup>118</sup>

#### 4.4.2 The Social Position of the Confucians

How then did Confucius convert this insight into a social and educational program? It has generally been thought that it consisted of training young men in the art of virtuous government, in order to change society from the inside, as they would influence the leaders of their states, who would then adopt policies espoused by him.<sup>119</sup> Eno takes a critical look at this view at this, and finds little evidence of Confucians serving in government, or participating in famous policy debates recorded in historical sources. This compounded with the fact that Confucius himself rejects all offers of administrative posts made to him in the *Lunyu*, counsels several of his disciples not to accept positions offered to them, as well as is evasive or dismissive about enquiries made by those in power about the suitability of his students leads Eno to presume that the view of Confucians as dutiful public servants is a projection of an image corresponding for one part to the attitudes of the school in later imperial epochs, but also one that the Early Confucians themselves cultivated to legitimize their ideological

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118 *Lunyu* 7:30

119 Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, 42.

program.<sup>120</sup>

As already mentioned, Eno sees the Confucians operating with what he calls a 'bifurcated doctrine', meaning that they effectively had two different bodies of knowledge aimed at different audiences: an external one composed of texts, such as the *Lunyu*. The internal doctrine, in contrary, was the program of ritual education aiming for the construction of ethically superior humans that was built of bodily practices and attitudes and could not be learned from writing or speech, but from emulation and participation. The internal program could thus only be appreciated and understood by someone who was already immersed in it, so the external linguistic doctrine had to exist in order to persuade outsiders to try the program, or at least explain its usefulness to them.<sup>121</sup> This is where the duty of governing comes into play. It provides an argument for the Confucian education in two levels, as it addresses the applicability of its contents for everyday life for the outsiders, while allowing the insiders a position that's above others engaged in the pursuit of good government.

The basic Confucian tenet is that ethical excellence translates into excellence in government. Thus persons with a Confucian training are superior to everyone else as they understand what truly constitutes good government, and they have a duty to participate in it in order to better the life of others and bring back the golden age of the Early Zhou. Why then we see so few Confucians in positions of power? An answers seems to be provided by the *Lunyu*, where Confucius is three times approached by a powerful figure in order to solicit his aid in the political arena, however Confucius turns down all three offers due to the same reason, the unworthiness of the potential patron. Thus while the Confucians state having a duty to participate in public affairs, it seems that the internal goal of ethical cultivation overrides this external one, as a subordinate position in an uncouth administration subjects one to risks to one's moral purity and is thus not desirable.<sup>122</sup> Further evidence for this position in the *Lunyu* comes from 4:5 and 6:9 where Confucius advises his disciples to quit states with bad leaders and 5:8 that seems to downplay the importance of *ren* in government, but as stated by Jyrki Kallio, this might be a snub towards Meng Wu, the person asking the questions from Confucius, who had participated in the usurpation of the state of Lu from its rightful rulers, in

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<sup>120</sup> Eno, 43–45.

<sup>121</sup> Eno, 43–45.

<sup>122</sup> Eno, 44.

effect “Ethical excellence has nothing to do with *your* government.”<sup>123</sup> ◦

Thus while claiming to train for the political arena, the Early Confucians were markedly reticent about entering it in practice due to their sense of superiority towards its other participants. A similar tendency of establishing value systems competing with the ones of the old land-based Zhou nobility and the rising bureaucratic administrators has been noted by Lewis in all the early intellectual schools of the Springs and Autumns and Warring States eras.<sup>124</sup> The Confucians, Mohists and Yangists all existed in varying degrees of opposition to the establishment. In the Confucian case the present political situation was seen as too corrupt, and supporters focused on self-improvement while waiting for the times to change. This creates an interesting parallel with what Poo Mu-Chou has called 'self-divinization movements' of the Warring States. He states that there was an increasingly strong focus in Warring States thought for processes of self-transformation with the aim to surpass the limits of human senses and intelligence and achieve an all-encompassing perspective that would enable the individual superhuman powers. Traditionally the *Neiye*-chapter of the *Guanzi* has been considered the earliest example of this mode of thought, and its development has been traced through the thinkers affiliated with the Daoist school, although there are elements of the omnipotent sage -character in the *Mengzi* too. Looking at Early Confucianism through Eno's lens of ethical self-improvement societies allows for aligning it in the general intellectual milieu where development of personal abilities through integrating the self into some greater whole seems to have been a central concern, although the cosmic context seen in later thought seems to be lacking and the world for the Early Confucians is decidedly human and social. Only in later Confucian writings, such as the *Mengzi* and *Xunzi* is the superhuman dimension of the sage developed.

#### 4.4.3 Confucius' Insight on the Function of Rituals

This view of Confucius also allows for a new perspective on his thoughts on ritual. Later Confucians have seen ritual as an instrument of social control, or social cohesion, depending

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123 Kallio, *Mestari Kongin Keskustelut*. footnote to 5:8, 161

124 Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, 63–64.

on the viewpoint taken, but in the *Lunyu* ritual seems to be something that defines boundaries and while it is instrumental both in governing a state, but perhaps more crucially, governing the self. This is in keeping with the self-improvement agenda of the Confucians. In 4:13 Confucius says that success requires yielding for the (benefit of the) state according to ritual, which I interpret as using ritual as a guide to where personal gain must succumb to the public.

4:13 “The Master said: Where are those who know to employ the *li* and thus place the (interests of the) state above (the interests of) their own selves? And those who do not, they are not worth mentioning in comparison.”

子曰：能以禮讓為國乎？何有？不能以禮讓為國，如禮何？

So the boundary between a ruler and a state, or indeed a subject and a state is drawn by ritual, and those unable to do so properly, are not really capable of any government, showing the Confucians' superior attitude towards administrators, or self-aggrandizing rulers, who can do no good to a state. 6:27 ritual is used to define the relation between a *junzi* and his studies, so that he would not err regardless of the breadth of things he studies. This suggests again that ritual is used to divide the permissible and unpermissible and thus define what the *junzi* can be.

6:27 The Master said: “If a *junzi* comprehensively studies *wen* and bind himself with *li*, then there is sure to be no betrayal on his part.”

子曰：君子博學於文，約之以禮，亦可以弗畔矣夫！

The word 'bind' (*yue* 約) occurring in twice above is interesting as it was a term used for written contracts that during the times of Confucius were increasingly supplanting ritual ties in defining the political loyalties of individuals.<sup>125</sup> This meant that inherited positions lost their importance, as it was possible to choose the person one wished to follow by binding oneself to them via a contract. Another novel feature was that the power of the bond laid in its textual nature, it was essentially a covenant, but without the sacrifice. Rights and responsibilities were set down in writing and archived, the administrative power of documents conquering

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<sup>125</sup> Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, 67–69.

over the ritual bonds created by sacrifice reflecting the loosening of the traditional ritual ties and the bureaucratization and professionalization of the political sphere of late Spring and Autumn era. It is curious then that Confucius would use such a word, as his program seems to run counter to the very development the bonds exemplified, unless we take him as trying to contest its meaning. The textuality of bonds would have surely drawn criticism from the Early Confucians, as there is a strong opposition to words and talking in the *Lunyu*.<sup>126</sup> It is repeated that a *junzi* is careful in his speech and prefers action to demonstrate his capabilities, and also appraises others by observing their conduct rather than listening them speak. This can be read as a critique of persons declaring undying loyalty and devotion to a political master in bonds, only to break them when the push comes to the shove. True loyalty was to be demonstrated in action, and for the Confucians it was ritual action that ultimately would prove their loyalty.

In 9:3 Confucius considers two ways where his contemporaries went against traditional norms. First is that linen is proscribed as the proper material for hats, but silk was currently preferred. Confucius sees no problem with it, since using silk is frugal. On the other hand, people had also been taken to make their bows of respect after climbing the steps outside of a building, although the rituals stipulate bowing below the steps. This is seen as a breach of conduct by Confucius, as he considers it arrogant. Thus it would seem that the rituals are not eternal and can be revised to fit the age as long as it is done in harmony with their spirit. Since silk has become cheaper than linen due to advances in production, it is not improper to change a rule to reflect the new situation. Arrogance, however, is not a valid reason for change, as curbing excessive egoism seems to be one of the primary functions of the rituals.

9:3 The Master said: “The *li* stipulates a hempen hat, but nowadays silk is used. This is economical, and thus I follow others in doing so. The *li* stipulates that one must bow before ascending the steps to a hall, but nowadays people bow at the top. This is extravagant, and thus I ignore others and bow at the bottom.”

子曰：麻冕，禮也；今也純，儉。吾從衆。拜下，禮也；今拜乎上，泰也。雖違衆，吾從下。

As Confucius stresses elsewhere, it is not enough to know the *li* but be able to put it in

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126 4:24, 5:5,

practice. The above example would seem to imply that it meant somehow obtaining their spirit, so one could adapt them to current situations, instead of being stuck with the antiquated rules. Perhaps it was by exposure and experience that one developed this ritual instinct.

As we can see from the preceding paragraph, the *Lunyu* does not contradict the tendency for personal choice overriding tradition, in either its external doctrine, which recommends finding administrative work, or the internal one, which requires adherents to place the Confucian community and its ritual purity over any political ties as the ultimate object of loyalty. And this seems to be what was meant by tying with ritual. The leaders that truly deserved loyalty were the former kings, but the traditional ritual ties connected to the ancestral cults were not valid anymore as the later descendants of the kings and regional rulers of old had squandered their inheritance and were seen as only paying lip service to their ancestors, not having their heart in it, and thus not really understanding what it was about. Thus new ones had to be forged, and the Confucians took to the task by personal devotion to the system created by the former kings. Although it was no longer functioning, all the pieces existed and study of ritual, music and culture could uncover them and by putting them in practice allow persons to shape themselves in the image of the ancients, becoming their true inheritors.

Thus the Confucians ran counter to the tendency to attach loyalty to certain persons instead of lineage groups evident in the development of the bond institution, as their commitment was to the entire Zhou cultural system, but in other respects followed its general outline summed up by Lewis:

“This new focus suggested the fundamental importance of the intent or will of the participants, the compelling and unequal character of the relationship, and the strong element of devotion implicit in the act. In contrast to the centrality of the sacrifice and the spirits in the covenant, the bond decentered the actual act of taking a life and emphasized the moral and emotional basis of human ties, as well as their hierarchic and authoritarian character.”<sup>127</sup>

That violence and killing were in the center of the Zhou ancestral cults we have already seen,

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<sup>127</sup> Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, 78.

but for all their talk of reviving traditions, the Confucians were actually in step with their times to reduce the importance of the actual sacrifice, while they concentrated on the attitude and comportment of the sacrificer as the true focus, as the object of sacrifice, as well as all the other rituals, was actually the transformation of the self. This set the sacrificial rituals that had dominated the religious and political life of the earlier Zhou dynasty on an equal footing with other more everyday aspects of ritual. This is in evidence in *Lunyu* 9:13 cited above, which is the only time Confucius discusses concrete ritual performances in the books oldest layer. The examples are of mundane behavior, not of grand state ritual. This is telling of the attitude of Early Confucianism towards ritual. The whole fabric of society was ultimately woven of the sageness of the former kings, and so commanded equal respect, and had equal potential for self-improvement. This is evidenced by the well-known *Lunyu* 7:22, where Confucius states that at least every other person has something worth emulating in them, and several passages describing the immanence of virtue<sup>128</sup>.

#### 4.4.4 Opposition to Violence and Vengeance

The repudiation of violence, and especially of vengeance, is also well-attested in the *Lunyu*. One of the hallmarks of the *junzi* is his patience in the face of insults. In two occasions<sup>129</sup> Confucius describes the the two ideals of the past Bo Yi 伯夷 and Shu Qi 叔齊 not hating others due to not dwelling in past injustices and his favorite disciple Yan Hui 顏回 gets the same honor in 6:3. This can be understood through the warrior culture of the Zhou that had contributed to the downfall of the lineage system. Personal honor was paramount to the Zhou nobility and any infractions against it were swiftly punished, as aptly described by the story of a retainer punching the face of his ruler after he had questioned his subjects loyalty during a social game in the king's private quarters.<sup>130</sup> The relative equality of the Western Zhou elites made no-one above possible retribution. This was compounded by the imperative to be remembered that provided a firm reason to aspire for greatness and to protect the fame of any achievements. When rulers started to get elevated to their own social class during the late Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, the imperative for vengeance shifted too.

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<sup>128</sup> 4:6, 7:30

<sup>129</sup> 5:23 and 7:15

<sup>130</sup> Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, 33.

Now it was the duty of the loyal retainer who had bonded himself to the lord to avenge for the lord in addition to his personal honor. This created a network of revenge that constantly provoked violence between states as well as individuals. It has been estimated that in most of the interstate wars during the period the cause was either avenging an insult or making one.<sup>131</sup>

The Confucian response to this culture of violence was twofold. First of all, they elevated the dynasty and its culture to the position of highest loyalty. Any vengeance was proper only if it furthered the restoration and expansion of the Zhou cultural system. This is why personal insults were not grounds for retribution. This would have been a meager consolation for the individuals suffering abuse, but the community provided for a more satisfying response too. As the Confucians believed in the superiority of their own value system, they could brush off anyone insulting them as simply being so far below them as not to be worth of notice.

Another way the Confucians attempted to deal with the culture of violence was the subjection of personal fame to the greater system. Confucius states in the *Lunyu* that he is not a creator, but a transmitter.<sup>132</sup> The greatest achievement is to find the thread leading back to the founder kings in the culture that they left. Perhaps mirroring the social development that saw leaders rise far above others, the Confucians denied the possibility of equaling the deeds of the founders, at least for the vast majority of people, and elevated them to mythical proportions. As their doctrine derived from roots as noble as this, it made them clearly superior to any other source of authority and enabled them to distance themselves from the day to day political struggle, all the while claiming to hold the keys to ending it and recreating the supposedly harmonious society of the early Zhou. This approach was later replicated by other intellectual schools, who claimed an ancient worthy as the originator of their doctrine, Yao by the Mohists, The Yellow Emperor by the Agriculturalists, Laozi, the supposed teacher of Confucius by certain Daoist elements, and so on. Later the Duke of Zhou was seen as the originator of Confucian doctrine, perhaps due to his association with Lu, Confucius' home state.

There is some evidence however, that he was specially revered by Confucius himself already, as in *Lunyu* 7:5 Confucius worries that it has been some time since he last saw the duke in his

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<sup>131</sup> Lewis, 37.

<sup>132</sup> 7:1



dreams. It is noteworthy that ancestors were considered to send dreams to their descendants, and this might hint that Confucius considered himself as a scion of the house of the Duke of Zhou, although the link is tenuous, it would fit well with the view of the Early Confucian approach to the ancestral cult that I present elsewhere in this study. Another possible connection between the duke and Confucianism in the ideological level would be that in the political debate on the inheritance of kingship at the time of King Cheng's regency between the dukes Zhou and Shao recorded in the *Shangshu*, duke Zhou promotes the idea that the mandate of heaven has been received by the Zhou as a group, and not the royal line personally, therefore rulership does not need to be transferred linearly, but should be given to those who have demonstrated their capabilities. Duke Shao insists that heaven has adopted the king as its eldest son, therefore receiving the world as his inheritance, and no-one else can be substituted. Predictably, king Cheng sided with duke Shao, and duke Zhou retired from government.<sup>133</sup> The issue would have certainly been known to Confucius, as the *Shangshu* was a part of his curriculum, and as such he might have identified with the figure of the duke Zhou, who was also credited with adapting the Shang ritual system in the beginning of the dynasty to fit the new rule, seeing himself as a continuator of his work in the new situation the world had found itself.

#### 4.4.5 The Human as a Socialized Body

The function of ritual in the *Lunyu* does not differ from what was the social function of the ancestral cult during earlier Zhou times, that is limiting aggression. While the ancestral cult had done this by drawing a line around the Zhou world and separated the killable and edible from fellow humans, due in part its focus in conquest and heroic deeds that encouraged seeking and protecting personal fame, had not been able to keep that line distinct enough to prevent interlineage violence within the Zhou world. The Early Confucians' answer was to reorient the Zhou world to become self-aware of the ritual system and how it was meant to work.

Ritual excellence shifted from honoring the altars and ancestors with a steady supply of

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<sup>133</sup> Shaughnessy, "Western Zhou History," 24–25.

victims and conquests to performance of ritual itself as a way of harmonizing ones own existence with the larger group that shared the same cultural heritage. The ritual boundary still separated the human from inhuman, but was moved from around the society to within each of its members, separating the social humanity from asocial animality. This self-consciousness of rituals' significance to society was one of the key discoveries of Confucius. Ritual bound not only descendants and ancestors to the land they drew sustenance from, but also every member of society was dependent on shared forms of conduct, dress and ideas for the very possibility of the existence of society. And these were also passed on from generation to generation, up to the same source as the Zhou nobility's land had come, the founding kings, and ultimately heaven itself.

So, society itself was sacred to the Early Confucians, as evidenced by the discussion on the proper material for a cap cited above. This turned everyday social interactions into ritual celebrations of the humanity of the participants. As the whole system was derived from heaven, no gradations within were possible, even the most mundane of social facts contained the whole in itself, and was a manifestation of the will to coexist, and proper performance evoked acceptance of it in its entirety, and vice versa. As these social institutions had been designed by persons much greater in merit than anyone living, they could not properly be understood discursively, therefore only experience and practice in their performance could propel one ahead on the way, as knowing the rituals did not entail virtuous conduct<sup>134</sup>.

This ritualization of everyday life was necessary for drawing attention to those things that made society possible. These changes to the practice of and attitudes towards ritual proposed by the Confucians revolved around reducing the importance of the lineage, which mirrors the general socio-political changes in motion at the time. Contrary to them, however, the Confucians wanted to also limit the influence of the state by relating people directly to the larger Zhou community that was symbolically represented by the monarchy, although the actual political power of the kings was not necessary for the functioning of the system, as it was due to the individual subjects to recognize and respect the ritual structure established by the virtue of the royal line that tied them together and act accordingly. This bypassed the growing influence of the state rulers, whose mutual competition was one of the major factors

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134 7:33

affecting the instability of the Zhou world.

The way ritual worked was through shaping bodies. Acting ritually highlighted the underlying common substrate of humanity. In offering a bow in greeting to someone, one acknowledges the similarity between the other and one self, in that the gesture only receives its meaning if it is replied to in like manner. In this way the bower recognizes the humanity of the other and his own humanity is thus confirmed in the ritually correct reply. All this is communicated in action, which is why comportment receives so much attention in the *Lunyu*. As Bell states, ritualization conjures the entire system of social relations in any one of its instances.<sup>135</sup> Thus the one who instigates the ritual greeting displays deference, which implies the unfavorable opposite of pride. The response invokes propriety shadowed by uncivility. And around these, the meaning starts to get deferred to linked concepts of humanity/animality, civilization/barbarism, order/disorder, virtue/vice, and so forth, until the participants of this most minuscule of ritual exchanges have actually reconstituted their very identities and the social system they form the part of, as well as their bodies as ritualized agents capable of leveraging this system in order to make their actions in it personally fulfilling.

Since the ritualizing depends on others recognizing it as such, the Confucians were preoccupied with the correct performance. The *Lunyu* contains detailed descriptions of Confucius' clothing, facial expression, way of walking, etc. in certain situations. I see this as a product of the Confucian view of ritual correctness being a requisite for successful action as described above. As others had no access to the mind of the performer, the sensual cues had to be accurate enough to trigger the correct response from the common ritual substrate. This also led to the view presented in some passages that *ren* was contagious.<sup>136</sup> In treating others in ritually correct ways, a person awakes parts of their shared cultural heritage and their responses reconstitute their bodies in a manner able to leverage that heritage themselves thus spreading correct action to their surroundings. Later Confucianism elevated this mechanism to the primary function of government in the metaphor of the wind of the *junzi* bowing the grass of the people, regardless of their dispositions. This visual dimension of mutually affirmed humanity is the key to the concept of *ren*.

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<sup>135</sup> Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 130.

<sup>136</sup> 4:1, 4:7

In the Western Zhou *ren* referred to manliness, masculinity and the handsomeness exemplifying the former qualities. It shares ancestry with *shi*, that was originally used to differentiate male animals from females in the Shang script.<sup>137</sup> *Shi* eventually became the self-reference of the Zhou nobility, possibly due to its association with the ideal of the warrior associated with masculinity, and the patrilineal kin ties uniting them through the ancestral cult.<sup>138</sup> By the time of Mencius it had turned into a technical term in Confucianism describing the humane-ness inculcated through the love of family members. As the *Lunyu* stands in the middle of this transition and abounds with references to *ren*, we should be able to find clues to what caused the word to undergo this change in meaning during the Spring and Autumn period.

For Confucius *ren* is intimately linked to the *junzi*. This draws the etymological connection to masculinity, as an ideal heir of earlier times would have indeed been a masculine and martial warrior able to carry on the legacy of his forbears. As discussed above, it was believed that the *de* as capacity to subjugate others was believed to radiate out of those who possessed it, and thus the suitability of a nobleman to this task would be evident from his power to draw in the outside, by force of arms or charisma. But as Confucius changed the rules of heredity, the aspect of the ideal heir changed accordingly. Now he was able to rise others to their own true heritage by engaging in ritually proper behavior and harness the *de* of the former kings to affirm his own humanity by invoking others'. The focus here is still on the visual, as it is in action that the *junzi* reveals himself, and as a consequence his *ren* is spread around his social surroundings. Thus the community of *ren* comes to replace the patrilineal *shi* as the principle of social ordering, leaving the particularities of the lineages for a more general shared identity as inheritors to the Zhou tradition and the humanity generated by it. This *ren* is still public and present in action, in contrast to the meaning it acquired in Mencius' project of providing a psychological motivation for adopting the Confucian ritual program, which reoriented it from the public sphere into the privacy of the family unit recently created by the administrative reforms.

The focus on individual performance and adoption of the *li* meant a new personalization of ritual. As we have seen the Western Zhou Ritual Reform affected a change in the ancestral

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<sup>137</sup> Kallio, *Mestari Kongin Keskustelut*, 37.

<sup>138</sup> Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, 32–33.

cults rituals, where the primary audience changed from the ancestors to other nobility and possibly commoners. The performance was staged by professional dancers, musicians and other ritualists, and its purpose was to display the power and rank of the lineage to outsiders, while the rituals before had been of a group celebrating its own history and future. Confucianism wanted to revert back to the old, as it saw personally and consciously performing the rituals as the key to self-improvement. It is not possible to know if this return to the past was done in purpose, that is if Confucius knew of the pre-Reform rituals, or is this merely a coincidence. The changes also challenged the opulence of the rituals, whose function had become to impress. The *Lunyu* advises thrift in performances and focuses rather on the sincerity and appropriateness of the performers, again stressing the personal over the spectacle.

#### **4.4.6 A Preliminary Conclusion and a Note on Theory**

And to close off this section of the work I would like continue in the vein of the above paragraph in commenting on the level of consciousness in Confucius' proposed program. Bell states that ritual action is always blind to its true purposes. She quotes Michel Foucault saying that "people know what they do and they know why they do what they do, but they do not know what what they are doing does."<sup>139</sup> Now, this contradicts to an extent my analysis of Confucius, as I see just this realization of the social function of ritual as the center, the one thread, if you will, of his program. There seems to be a blind spot in Bell's view, that excludes the possibility of ritual practitioners metatheorizing their own practice, although she does write about the scientific theorizing of ritual and how it has constructed the object of its scrutiny, deconstruction of which is a major aim of the book (*Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*). As well as being anti-theoretical, as in refusing to construct a coherent theory of what 'ritual' is, the reason for this lacuna might lie in the theorists that Bell mostly reads to formulate her practice-centered outlook, namely Luis Althusser, Pierre Bourdieu and Foucault. All known for focusing on power not as coercion directed by someone on the outside, but as constitutive of social reality or individual subjectivity itself, therefore functioning by defining the horizon of possible actions, instead of forcing it's subjects to choose in a certain manner.

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<sup>139</sup> Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 108.

While these analyses have provoked much thought and valuable research, they can also be criticized for certain element of inescapability. Once the hegemony is in place, or a subject formed its habitus, or has been formed by biopower, even with the knowledge of their functioning, it is not possible to step outside of them, as they are still constitutive of actors. Ritual reforms should therefore attach to reversals or changes in their signifying practices that can be accepted by the potential ritual community. The symbolic reversal of the status of the pope in the Reformation as an example: a catholic would have mapped the pope/lay member pair to holy/sinful, but the economical practices of the church had destabilized this to the point that the reformers could reverse the mapping by claiming a moral bankruptcy of the church and holiness in the direct connection to God afforded by belief.

In this case the change in ritual followed a change in the social world that was caused by non-ritual reasons, but what of reforming ritual traditions from the inside, without claimed rupture? Bell does treat this, and comments that any tradition is always recreated in any appeal to it,<sup>140</sup> but innovation is obviously limited by the acceptance of the ritual community intended for adoption of the practice. Perhaps we can now see how Confucius' insight into the Zhou ritual system's functioning might be seen in the light of Bell's views. It is obvious that Confucius did not want to present himself as an innovator, as he explicitly states, but rather sought acceptance to his claim that he was returning to the authentic tradition of the Zhou kings. By doing so he sought acceptance to his new views, although from the treatment he received in the various courts it would seem that he was largely ignored outside the circle of his students. It also seems that Confucius did not include the new view on ritual I ascribe to him into his explicit teaching, which might have caused the frustration so evident among his students in the *Lunyu*. Several passages have Confucius professing the simplicity and immanence of his way,<sup>141</sup> and conversely we see the students lamenting the difficulty and haziness in the very same teaching<sup>142</sup>.

Could this gap be caused by Confucius' metaperspective on ritual that he did not share with his students? From 7:24 and the passages cited above I get the feeling that the students felt that Confucius was holding some key ideas back, that would have enabled them to rise to his

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<sup>140</sup> Bell, 130.

<sup>141</sup> 4:6, 6:17, 7:2, 7:30

<sup>142</sup> 6:12, 9:11

level. It is of course also possible that this reticence was due to inarticulateness of his doctrine, as he predated the other schools who would soon start to question the principles and solutions of his students. Could it be that Confucius was simply using the ritual tools available to him to try to make people respect the kings again, “not knowing what what he was doing did?” I do doubt it, simply for the reason that he was not very successful. There must have been hundreds of people like him trying to restore society and failing, but for some reason only Confucius' tradition survived. I believe this must be due to some novelty that caused people to flock around it see it as worthy of dedicating their lives to passing it on. It was obvious that there was something to it, just what it was wasn't so clear.

So to return to the possibility that Confucius had a theory of ritual that although not as developed as the one employed in this study, still pointed into the same direction, that of ritual construction of socialized agents and a reality infused with those social categories, and that this informed his renovation of the Zhou ritual practice, I deem it tenable. But it is also clear that the explicit formulation of this theory had to wait for future generations of his students, with two different versions passed on to us in the Mencius and *Xunzi*. Thus Confucius used his insight to sharpen his sense of ritual in an attempt to steer his contemporaries from the inside of the ritual tradition they ascribed to, although increasingly in name only.

## 5 Conclusion

So we have arrived to the end of our journey through the Zhou dynasty, or at least parts of its ritual system. There are few threads that I would like to pick up and provisorily explore where they might lead from this work. The first one is the one that originally led me to start writing this thesis. It starts from a course essay I wrote for a seminar on Li Zehou's *Lunyu jin du* 論語

今讀 taught by *monsieur* Frédéric Wang in the INALCO in 2013, where I explored the way *li*, *ren* and *xiao* 孝, filiality, could be linked together using Li's notion of sedimentation as the humanization of the world and of humans themselves. This led me to explore the relation between animality and humanity in Early China, which again led to the current work.

While there is very little direct discourse on the nature and status of animals during Western and early Eastern Zhou times, it practically explodes once the interschool debates commence in the fourth century BCE. Thus in order to make sense of the debate, it seemed reasonable to chart what had been thought of the matter before, what were the common presuppositions shared, or attacked, by the parties of the debate. This led me to Confucius, as criticism of Confucianism is the force driving the first outright argumentative works in the Chinese tradition, of which the *Mozi* 墨子 is the longest preserved one. The *Lunyu* speaks very little of animals, but as usually animals cannot be discussed without humans being implied and vice versa, so I decide to embark on a study of humanity in the *Lunyu* and to chart the evolution of the concept through earlier times.

As we have seen, in the beginning of the Zhou a human was a man, who had derived his humanity from heaven. To hold on to this gift, he had to perform as his primary duty the killing of non-humans in order to show himself worthy of humanity and to reforge the link to heaven through consuming the meat of his catch with his ancestors. This also formed the basis of stable society, as social positions were defined by the ancestors and reconfirmed by circulating the sacrificial meat through dependent and superior lineages affirming social ties. The king was at the top of the hierarchy as the original recipient of heavenly favor. This presents an interesting possibility of further study brushed upon in this thesis. As the king was the ultimate source of authority he was also the ultimate threat, the one whose potential for violence was the greatest. This creates an interesting parallel to western ideas of sovereignty, particularly that of Hobbes, who saw in it the end of the state of nature, where all were constantly under threat of violence, until the social contract delegated the monopoly of its conductance to the sovereign, who then became the sole just killer making civilized society and humanity possible.

The parallel to Western Zhou kingship is striking, but the matter is made even more



interesting by introducing Jacques Derrida's notion of sovereignty as the self-defining feature distinguishing humans from animals, and eating as a fundamental way of relating oneself to the world. The sovereign has the right to rule, and thus freedom from the bestial instincts. To crown this all there is the Zhou kings' self reference *yiren* 一人, one human, often written with the definitive article as the One Man. Now reminding ourselves that one in Chinese connotes wholeness and completeness, the king becomes the one true man, the sovereign, the originator of violence and the bulwark of civilization in a soup of related concepts so thick that I find it difficult to resist probing it right away.

But in the interest of finishing this thesis I will continue with it for a while longer. During the Zhou rule many of the surrounding peoples and polities were drawn to the might and prestige of it and started to adopt certain features of its elite culture in a development that would continue to the fifth century BCE, when the cultural border around what was to become China started to harden. This Zhouisation was a contributor to the decline of the ancestral cults as it brought in new members to the state structure that had not been participants to its founding, and thus had no place in the original hierarchy of the cults. It also increased the diversity within the Zhou world, which was already growing apart into several regionalized variants of the culture. There was an attempt to stop this process around the middle of the ninth century BCE, when comprehensive reforms to the Zhou rituals were promulgated by the king, which attempted to bring the royal house back into the ideological center of the Zhou world by fostering a culture of remembrance and nostalgia for the founding kings of the dynasty and their victories. This attempt at creation of a new common identity for the estranged parts of the Zhou realm ultimately failed, but its key building blocks of symbolification of violence inherent in the traditional ancestral cult practices, focus on solemnity and correct performance of rituals and reverent attitude towards the first kings elevated to legendary status were to inspire Confucius in his own program of reform.

The concept of humanity that arose from Confucius's interpretation of the Zhou rituals had parallels to that of early Western Zhou already discussed, but the major difference was the substitution of cultural excellence to capacity for violence. The origin myth of the dynasty was changed from the conquest campaign against Shang into the creation of its social and ritual institutions that were the basis of humanity. The access to this civilizing power

originating in heaven was freed from the confines of patrilinear descent regulated by the ancestral cults to the cultural realm, where it was free for anyone to employ. Thus the descent group of the kings broadened to the entire Zhou world, potentially including anyone adopting the correct ritual forms of behavior. This meant that while humanity was still derived from heaven, it was no longer dependent on domination of the non-human, but interaction with other humans, which would allow reciprocal affirmation of the humanity of the participants, that was elevated by Confucius in making it ritualized thus setting it on a status parallel to the great services of the state cults. Humanity still had to triumph over animality, but the battleground was internal and success depended on others as well as oneself.

This is then the conclusion of my study, and as I anticipated, it leads to interesting ways of apprehending some aspect of the philosophical debates that were to follow over the coming three centuries or so. First of all, when later Confucians, Mohists, Daoists and others debate the correct role and composition of the state, they are actually arguing about what it is to be a human. The Confucian conservatism arises from their conception of humanity as something fragile, only enabled by the civilizing influence of society. This view is exemplified by Xunzi 荀子 in his famous thesis of the “badness” of human nature, which can be lifted to morality only by artifice. Humanity is a construct that confines the asocial animal within us all and enables cooperation. Similar notions are furthered by Mencius, although he claims that the moral system is inborn, but requires careful nurturing to grow straight. Humans themselves are not able to humanize themselves, only a superhuman sage can understand society and plan reforms.

The Daoists on the contrary see humans as animals no different from the others. One of the human-animals' traits is sociability, they tend to enjoy each others' company and work and live together in groups, just like many other animals do. The kind of artifice caused by Confucian or other kind of training is seen to cause more harm than good, as the complex stratified society it enables only serves to subjugate human-animals to the will of others causing them to abandon their natural sociability and start murdering each other for insignificant causes like property, power or honor, that are all creations of the same system that purports to make them into something more noble.

These two interpretations are of course but impressionist sketches of the possibilities of taking 'humanity' as one of the central terms in the Warring States period philosophy that fiercely debated the nature of rulership, society and humanity, eventually developing the ideology that was to enable the centralized rule of the ensuing imperial dynasties. I hope use this thesis in the future as a springboard for diving into this debate and hopefully bringing some new insights to the surface.

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